University of Alberta

Becoming Part of Inner City Space: A Critical Ethnography of Racialized Youth

by

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Abstract

This thesis traces the ambivalent ways that inner city youth experience colonial processes of subjectification that naturalize their subjection to criminalized, impoverished social spaces. I use my ethnographic fieldwork at a drop-in recreational centre in the inner city of Edmonton, Alberta to elucidate how youth negotiate stereotyped conceptions of race, space, and age. I highlight how middle-class conceptions of childhood animate efforts to create safe space for inner city youth such that they are rendered excludable from a space that should be fashioned to value their experiences. I then employ post-colonial theorizations of fixity to illustrate how indigenous youth experience their aboriginality as a quality that is *naturally* subject to (Canadian) Whiteness. I then draw on my participation in a hip-hop program at the centre to illustrate how indigenous youth subvert colonial racisms through their performance of a hybridized hip-hop that contests the relegation of aboriginality to anachronistic, criminalized spaces.

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Introduction

Youth who occupy North American inner cities are routinely beleaguered by discursive conceptions of race, space, and age that are meant to naturalize their relegation to impoverished, criminalized spaces (Bauman, 2001, Wacquant, 2001, Ratner, 1996). This thesis draws on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at a drop-in recreational centre in the inner city of Edmonton, Alberta. It sets out to unearth the often ambivalent ways that racist and colonial processes of subjectification affect how inner city youth navigate Canadian social spaces. Crystal Kids Youth Centre was established to provide inner city youth with a *safe* alternative to the violent disorder said to pervade the inner city streets. Having acquired ethnographic research access to the Centre through my participation in the start-up of their hip-hop program, I observed and participated in a social space where youth must actively negotiate stereotyped understandings of youth, Whiteness and aboriginality[1]. It was here that I witnessed how this marginalized group of youth articulate, embody, and subvert colonial conceptions of identity that typically obfuscate the systemic violence they experience in their daily lives. To enable my appreciation and subsequent communication of how these modes of subjection structure the daily routines of youth residing in inner city space, I immersed myself in the social space of the Centre.

This thesis employs several disparate bodies of research to illustrate how youth experience the colonial conceptions of race, space and youth that comprised the social space of the Centre. It draws on the sociology of childhood scholarship to evince how neighbourhood youth are affected by the middle-class conceptions of youth that underlie attempts to create safe space at the Centre. The three questions I address in Chapter One are: How do arbiters of this space imagine the safety of youth in relation to the perceived dangers of inner city space? Do attempts to exclude the influence of the street from the Centre also render inner city youth excludable from this space? Are neighbourhood youth who attend the Centre able to subvert and contest the exclusionary conceptions of childhood that fuel the production of this space?

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[1] I use the terms indigenous and aboriginal to refer to people that are of First Nations heritage. In the inner city of Edmonton this includes people that are of Plains Cree, Blackfoot, Ojibwa, and Inuit heritage.

It then employs post-colonial theorizations of the stereotype to illustrate how colonial racisms structure the everyday lives of indigenous youth residing in Canadian inner city spaces. Four questions have guided Chapter Two: How do youth experience inferiorizing stereotypes that cast aboriginality as a sign of criminality and anachronism? What impact does popular culture have on how indigenous youth understand their identified racial difference? How does the binding of aboriginality to criminalized, impoverished spaces affect how indigenous youth experience their stereotyped racial difference? How do these inferiorizing stereotypes disavow the colonial violence upon which claims to Canadian Authority are founded?

I then draw on my participation in the Centre's fledging hip-hop program to elucidate how aboriginal youth use this form of musical expression to contest the violence and racisms they encounter in inner city spaces. A number of specific questions organize the final chapter of this thesis: of what significance is the hip-hop instructors' disavowal of the violent masculinity that underlies mainstream gangster rap? How do the messages of self-improvement and social change that comprise underground hip-hop help aboriginal youth counter the violent dictates of the inner city streets? Why do the instructors incorporate aboriginal cultural practices into their performance of hip-hop? How does this practice of hybridization affect their subjection to colonial racisms?

Situating My Research Site

Located on the northeast side of Edmonton, Crystal Kids Youth Centre[2] is a non-profit drop-in centre founded by three philanthropic seniors who sought to "give inner city children a better chance by providing recreational activities in a safe environment" (Crystal Kids Youth Centre Mission Statement). For six days every week Centre staff provide neighbourhood youth supervised access to internet-equipped computers, video-game systems, billiards, air hockey and sporting activities. The space of the Centre is divided into a front foyer, kitchen, gymnasium and computer room, each of which is surveyed by a member of the staff at all times (diagrams of the Centre are provided in Appendix A). This access to supervised recreational activities is meant to provide neighbourhood youth with a viable alternative to life on the streets where Centre organizers believe "there is an ever presence of drugs, alcohol and prostitution" (Crystal Kids Youth Centre Policies and Procedures Manual).

The area of Edmonton in which the Centre was established is a notorious hub for prostitution and narcotic distribution. According to Sherene Razack (2002b), the illicit sale of sex and drugs are primary components of the economies of crime and desperation that structure inner city spaces in Canadian Prairie Provinces. Couched between two street corners frequented by women soliciting prostitution and an abandoned building that is used to deal drugs, the Centre is located in direct proximity to epicentres of the inner city dangers from which staff try to protect youth. Like most other criminalized inner city spaces, this area is heavily patrolled by police officers charged with containing the threat posed by its manifold dangers (Martinot, 2003b, Razack, 2002b).

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[2] Crystal Kids Youth Centre was named after Crystal Glass Ltd., the company that has served as the primary sponsor for the Centre since its inception.

This impoverished inner city area is rarely inhabited by the consumer classes of Edmonton who generally regard it as a space of unremitting danger and disorder. Decades of economic decay have corroded the neighbourhood's potential for commercial livelihood. In fact, the most common establishments located here are pawn-brokers, churches, and non-profit service organizations; this is not unusual, as such commercial landscapes typically characterize impoverished North American areas (Wacquant, 2004). In the two blocks surrounding the Centre, only six businesses remain open: a used-car lot, a bridal shop, two pawn brokers, one church, and a Portuguese Bakery.

The Centre is open to all youth between the ages of 7 and 17 from three to eight p.m. Over the course of one five hour shift Centre staff supervise approximately 70 neighbourhood youth. This daily population usually consists of a core group of 35 youth who regularly attend the Centre and another thirty-odd youth who frequent the Centre on a more casual basis. Most of the youth who attend the Centre routinely grapple with exigent life circumstances; including long-term parental unemployment, food shortages, substance use, and intra-familial physical and sexual abuse. Like most inner cities in Prairie Provinces, the area to which the Centre caters its services is disproportionately populated by people of aboriginal descent. Whereas aboriginal people comprise only ten percent of the wider civic population, at least fifty percent of the youth who frequent the Centre are of some aboriginal heritage (Alook, 2004).

During the bulk of my fieldwork the Centre was managed by seven staff members; all of whom had experience working with children in different recreational settings. Outside of their time at the Centre the staff usually occupied White, working-class social spaces. As the executive director of the Centre "Earl"[3] oversaw its daily operations by ensuring that members of the staff acted in accordance with the mandates set out by the Board of Directors. He also networked with different government and community organizations to obtain the funding necessary to keep the Centre operative. Earl, who is Métis, boasts nearly a decade of experience delivering recreational services to aboriginal youth in urban centres and reserves.

As the floor supervisor, Trent was responsible for the day-to-day safety of youth at the Centre. A 24 year-old man with an unparalleled proficiency in every athletic activity performed at the Centre, Trent was widely respected by youth from the neighbourhood, especially for the more discretionary style of supervision he displayed with the older youth who routinely found themselves in trouble for their "misbehaviour". Trent alternated between the three principal areas of the Centre –

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[3] For the sake of anonymity I have changed all of the participants' names in my thesis.

the computer room, front foyer, and gymnasium. This practice was undertaken to ensure each member of the staff was effectively supervising their assigned area. Over the course of a five hour shift the Centre was typically supervised by another three supervisors.

I acquired research access to the Centre through my participation in the start-up of their hip-hop program. Started by a leisure studies doctoral student from the University of Alberta, the hip-hop program was originally a recreation-based music course for students at Boyle Street Educational Centre (BSEC), a charter school located in the downtown area of Edmonton. For five weeks in the summer of 2005 alumni from Boyle Street taught youth at the Centre about the four traditional elements of hip-hop: breakdancing, rapping (Emceeing), DJ'ing, and graffiti-art[4] (Lashua, 2005, Kelley, 1997). During this period I acted as a resource coordinator for the instructors. My task was to ensure they had access to all the materials and instructional support necessary to make the program run effectively.

Mike, who was one of the first students of the BSEC program, acted as the artistic director of the hip-hop program at Crystal Kids. This meant that he was primarily responsible for assembling the other instructors and teaching youth about the different elements of hip-hop. Of both Cree and Vietnamese descent, Mike spent a sizeable portion of his childhood in a white foster home. Here he came to experience his identified racial difference as a detriment to inclusion in white Canadian social spaces. Now an accomplished break dancer and DJ, he presently divides his time between teaching responsibilities at BSEC and breakdancing commitments with his aboriginal hip-hop group. In addition to performing hip-hop at venues all around North America, his group also facilitates workshops about social issues pertinent to urban aboriginal youth, such as gang lifestyle, drug and alcohol abuse, and the value of education.

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[4] These forms of artistic expression have been widely recognized as the four traditional components of hip-hop. Breakdancing is a highly acrobatic and stylized form of dance that draws on a variety of forms, motions, and maneuvers, especially from martial arts, gymnastics, and popular funk dance. Rapping refers to the practice of rhythmically delivering rhymes over music or *a cappella*. DJ'ing involves the mixing of beats and scratching of records to create music. Graffiti-art refers to the intentional application of a media made by humans on any surface, but usually takes the form of a painted art, drawings, or words (Lashua, 2005, Kelley, 1997, Rose, 1994)

In his capacity as the artistic director of the program, Mike was expected to bring other rappers, breakdancers, and DJ's to the Centre. Jenny was one of the hip-hop instructors who came to the Centre most frequently. A seventeen year-old woman of aboriginal descent who is still a student at BSEC, Jenny grew up in many of the inner city neighbourhoods to which the Centre caters its services. Like youth from the Centre whose families have been affected by long-term unemployment, she was regularly charged with taking care of her younger siblings. During her early adolescent years Jenny regularly drank and used drugs. Now a respected rapper and active participant in the Edmonton art community, Jenny pinpoints the music class she enrolled in at Boyle Street as the major catalyst for her transformation. On afternoons that she came to the Centre, Jenny spent the bulk of her time teaching kids how to rap and perform the dance-steps that are foundational to breakdancing.

Julia, the other primary hip-hop instructor at the Centre, is a poet and DJ of aboriginal and South-East Asian heritage. Having been raised in different urban areas of Edmonton, Julia possessed little knowledge of her aboriginality until the violent death of her father sparked her interest in learning about her heritage. In addition to working full-time at a hospital cafeteria Julia hosts a radio show about underground hip-hop on the University's community radio station. When she was at the Centre, Julia played different hip-hop records for the youth with whom she also discussed the history and politics of hip-hop.

These hip-hop instructors played a central role in my examination of how aboriginal youth understand themselves through colonial racisms. All three of the instructors grew up in impoverished areas where they experienced their aboriginality as an obstacle to success in Canadian social space. I draw on my experience assisting with the instruction of hip-hop to illustrate how these aboriginal youth employ it to affect their subversion of the colonial racisms that typically constitute inner city space.

Researching Inner City Youth

The impoverishment of inner city spaces has long been an object of inquiry for social science researchers. Yet, only a handful of scholars have critically examined the exclusionary systems of meaning that comprise the social spaces that are occupied by "at-risk" inner city youth. Contributors to the emergent body of youth studies literature have sought to challenge the widespread perception that youth is a state of emotional immaturity and social incompetence. Sociology of childhood scholar Peter Kelly (2006, 2003, 2000) has demonstrated how contemporary "at-risk" discourses imagine youth as a space of transition that could jeopardize the realization of certain desired adult futures. "At-risk" youth who are thought to be incapable of safely negotiating this transition are made the targets for a range of interventions meant to facilitate their acquisition of self-regulating, entrepreneurial capacities (Kelly, 2003). Yet, by only attending to the roles that knowledge and expertise play in the discursive construction of youth, Kelly is unable to evidence the different ways that youth *experience* the discursive construction of childhood. In contrast, I adopt an ethnographic research design to illustrate the multiple ways that youth embody, contest and ignore hegemonic conceptions of childhood that disavow their agency and social competence.

Children's geographers Gill Valentine (1997, 1996) and Catherine Robinson (2000) have offered instructive explications of how youth subvert hegemonic conceptions of childhood that deny their capacities to navigate social spaces. Using data gathered through semi-structured interviews with "street-frequenting youth" Robinson (2000) proves that most young people are able to reflexively identify and navigate spaces they find threatening and those they find safe and useful. Valentine (1997, 1996) also demonstrates that youth routinely subvert the widespread denial of their ability to safely negotiate "adult" spaces. In fact, Valentine argues that spatial competence "is not a stable attribute of a particular age but rather is a fluid context-dependent performance that can be staged by children and adults alike (86)." These studies effectively illustrate how hegemonic conceptions of childhood that assume young people's innocence and immaturity ignore the different capacities to negotiate danger that they develop in their daily routines (Valentine, 1997). While these studies successfully re-introduce the agency of children into the study of human geography, they offer little insight into how youth are imagined in relation to impoverished, criminalized spaces. I address this gap in the literature by showing how the perceived innocence of youth is invoked against the feared violence and disorder of inner city spaces. Such an approach will also offer unique insight into how "at-risk" interventions cast the everyday lives of inner city youth as contagions from which they need protection.

This thesis also contributes to the emergent body of literature that approaches the inner city as a site of violent, racial subjection. In his nuanced ethnographic account of a boxing gym on the Southside of Chicago, Loic Wacquant (2004) illuminates how the violence of the street animates social relations amongst Black residents of American ghettos. After subjecting himself to the gruelling, hyper-masculine regimen that neighbourhood boxers routinely endure, Wacquant (2004) alleges that "it is in its double relation of symbiosis and opposition to the neighbourhood and to the grim realities of the ghetto that the gym defines itself" (18). While he effectively conveys how the processes of spatial and social immobilization disproportionately affect Black American residents of the ghetto, Wacquant (2004) rarely attends to the processes of racialization that constitute inner city spaces. I address this lack by approaching the inner city of Edmonton as a racialized space in which aboriginal youth routinely encounter stereotypes meant to naturalize their relegation to impoverished spaces.

Socio-legal scholar Bob Ratner (1996) illustrates how aboriginal youth experience the inner city of Vancouver as a site of racial and political subjection. Using data gathered through semi-structured interviews with inner city residents, Ratner (1996) shows that aboriginal youth typically migrate to city centres in search of housing and work. Once there, aboriginal youth experience a social space that is akin to a cultural limbo where they are excluded from Canadian social relations and yet are isolated from any traditional aboriginal community. Although this research effectively conveys the feelings of isolation that many aboriginal youth experience in Canadian inner cities, it does not elucidate how colonial racisms affect their subjection to the arbitrary power of Canadian Authority. To add to Ratner's nuanced account, I illustrate how stereotypes of the anachronistic, criminal "Indian"[5] work to legitimize the colonial violence to which indigenous youth are routinely subject in Canadian social spaces.

Critical race scholar Sherene Razack (2002b) more effectively underscores the colonial matrixes of power that govern inner city spaces through her explication of the socio-legal forces that triggered the harrowing murder of an aboriginal sex-trade worker by two white University students. Her account conveys how aboriginal people experience the inner city of Regina as a site of violent legal and racial subjection, where, according to Razack (2002b), "their encounters with white settlers have principally remained encounters in prostitution, policing, and the criminal justice system" (153). Razack (2002b) successfully maps the quantifiable effects of colonial racisms that manifest in the heightened police and state control to which aboriginal peoples are disproportionately subject in Prairie inner cities. Yet, because she does not approach racisms as modes of subjectification, Razack (2002b) is not interested in unsettling the rigid racial binaries through which the victim and her assailants have typically been understood. Through my attention to the different ways that youth enact, embody, and contest stereotyped conceptions of aboriginality,

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[5] I use the term "Indian" in instances that I am referring to stereotyped conceptions of Aboriginality.

I illustrate how racisms function as modes of subjectification that animate the daily lives of indigenous youth residing in inner city space. By showing that indigenous youth's occupation of these pejorative stereotypes is neither natural nor inevitable, I unsettle conceptions of identity that are premised on an inert distinction between Whiteness and aboriginality.

To elucidate how youth use hip-hop to contest these colonial racisms, this thesis also draws on the recent spate of scholarship that explores the socio-political dimensions of hip-hop. Most research on hip-hop explicates the casual connection between the hyper-masculine violence that pervades gangster rap and the extreme poverty experienced by Black people living in urban America (Alexander, 2005, Kubrin, 2005, Sernhede, 2000, hooks, 1994). Hip-hop scholars have given less critical attention to the different ways that racialized youth use hip-hop to remedy their economic and political marginalization. Historian of Black popular culture Robin G. Kelley (1997) provides a detailed analysis of how Black and Latino youth have approached hip-hop as a means to "get paid" and combat the widespread unemployment experienced by people of colour in America. Yet, as Kelley (1997) concedes, the unabashed celebration of capital that underlies this philosophy only serves to buttress the consumer capitalist practices that turn on the widespread subjugation of racialized minorities. Kelley (1997) also leaves unexamined how racialized youth understand and appropriate the political systems of meaning that comprise hip-hop in ways that contest the processes of racial identification that so often constitute their subjection. This thesis builds on Kelley's analysis by exploring how inner city youth use hip-hop to strengthen their (inner) selves against the colonial racisms that otherwise consign them to stereotyped identities and peripheral social spaces.

In his ethnographic account of the hip-hop program started at a charter school in downtown Edmonton leisure scholar Brett Lashua (2005) explores how aboriginal youth approach hip-hop as a space to vocalize and perform their negotiations of identity. Lashua (2005) demonstrates the multiple ways that youth understand and contest stereotyped representations of aboriginality through the different mediums of hip-hop. I build on this research by bringing post-colonial theorizations of hybridity to my analysis of how aboriginal youth re-present themselves through hip-hop. While a number of scholars have alluded to the hybridity of hip-hop, there has been no attempt to explore how this hybridization can be used to contest and subvert the racisms that many hip-hop practitioners seek to challenge (Gilroy, 2004, Kelley, 1997, Gilroy, 1993). In so doing, I illustrate how their performance of hybridized cultural practices undermines processes of racial identification that typically consign aboriginal youth to stigmatized and anachronistic social spaces.

Post-Colonial Theorizations of Fixity and the Stereotype

This thesis employs post-colonial theorizations of fixity, hybridity and the stereotype to explicate how relations amongst inner city youth are structured by colonial racisms. I approach colonialism as those socio-political situations in which a group of peoples are forced to live under the auspices of a "foreign" ruling power (Papoulias, 2004).Originally used to analyze art, literature, and culture, post-colonial theories have only recently been imported into the fields of law and sociology

(Mohanram, 1999, Jacobs, 1996). In fact, scant research has been undertaken to illuminate how subject peoples *experience* colonial stereotypes as modes of subjectification. Such research would offer critical insight into the means by which aboriginal people's identities are being fixed by inferiorizing racisms. It would also elucidate the different ways that colonial modes of identification can be contested and undermined by people who encounter these racisms in their everyday lives. I use these theories to elucidate the often ambivalent ways that colonial racisms affect how youth understand themselves and their relation to social space (Bhabha, 1994).

Fixity is the primary means by which the otherness of colonized peoples has been constructed (Young, 1995, Bhabha, 1994, Said, 1978). It is a paradoxical mode of representation that at once suggests an unchanging order and yet also connotes danger, disorder and demonic repetition (Bhabha, 1994). Scholars have typically suggested that colonial discourse imposes a rigid distinction between the identities of the colonizers and the colonized. Bhabha (1994), on the other hand, insists that these forms of identification are characterized by an ambivalence that ensures subject peoples can never be effectively fixed to their inferiorizing representations (Papoulias, 2004). During my fieldwork at the Centre it was this ambivalence that necessitated the constant reiteration of inferiorizing stereotypes of the anachronistic Indian to ensure that indigenous youth remained subject to the authority of Canadian Whiteness (Jacobs, 1996). According to Bhabha (1994), this ambivalence exposes both the power of colonial discourse and the limits of this authority as well.

The colonial stereotype, which is the principal discursive strategy of fixity, is a form of knowledge and identification that "vacillates between what is always already known and something that must be anxiously repeated" (Bhabha, 1994: 94). Once subject to this metonymic form of representation colonized peoples become known through certain stereotyped signs of difference that render them governable even as their otherness remains a marker of potential danger and disorder (Dutta, 2004, Bhabha, 1994). The stereotype affects a colonial form of visibility that allows newly encountered people to be understood as a particular type of person with *known* traits and behaviours. Canonical post-colonial theorist Edward Said (1978: 58-59) compares the stereotype to a median category, which:

> allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing. In essence such a category is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things... The threat is muted, familiar values impose themselves, and in the end the mind reduces the pressures upon it by accommodating things to itself as either "original" or "repetition" (58-59).

This production of racial difference as an immutable social reality creates a discursive space in which subject peoples can become the objects of knowledge and surveillance. indigenous peoples are thereafter construed as degenerate on the basis of their identified racial origin, permitting their disentitlement to land now occupied by the colonizing European peoples (McClintock, 1995, Bhabha, 1994). During the British colonization of Western Canada the knowledge that indigenous peoples were barbaric and in need of civilized intervention has legitimized the violent occupation of their land (Mawani, 2003, Razack, 2002a)

This thesis explores how aboriginality is construed as an immutable *inferior* difference in the everyday lives of inner city youth. By tracing the different encounters that aboriginal youth have with inferiorizing stereotypes, I evidence how colonial racisms make aboriginality visible through the median categories of the drunken, criminal, and ultimately anachronistic Indian. In so doing I show how aboriginality is rendered naturally subject to the authority of Canadian Whiteness. This analysis of colonial racisms extends the applicability of these concepts beyond their use in the analysis of literary and historical texts to the study of everyday processes of subjectification that constitute inner city spaces. Moreover, I demonstrate that routine encounters with colonial stereotypes are integral elements of white settler mythologies: fabricated stories that circulate in nation-states founded by Europeans on non-European land. According to Razack (2002a), the dissemination of these mythologies enables the disavowal of the conquest, slavery, and forced relocation of indigenous peoples upon which claims to Canadian sovereignty are founded.

This research also attends to the distinctly *spatial* dimensions of colonial racisms by showing how aboriginal youth experience processes of racial exclusion that preserve settler spaces of Whiteness (Said, 1978, Fanon, 1967). I use the term "settler spaces of Whiteness" to denote urban spaces that are maintained through the exclusion of aboriginal people who are consigned to impoverished Native spaces. Whiteness does not refer to some originary racial essence, but rather to a construct that signifies the racialized identity of colonizers that takes on meaning in opposition to the inferior qualities that are ascribed to aboriginality (Dyers, 2000, Keith, 2000).

This thread of my thesis draws attention to how colonial racisms are enacted to make aboriginal youth feel disentitled to their occupation of settler spaces of Whiteness.

By highlighting the exclusionary processes that affect the creation of these differently raced urban areas, this thesis highlights how spaces are claimed to the detriment of racialized, criminalized "Others" (Razack, 2002a). I reject the prevalent notion of space as a passive arena in which social relations simply transpire (Gordillo, 2004, Poptke, 2003, Razack, 2002a, Shields, 1999). I build on research that illustrates how hegemonic uses of space are infused with exclusionary conceptions of identity (Gough and French, 2005, McCann, 1999). Furthermore, I evidence how Centre supervisors fashion the safety and order of the Centre through the exclusion of inner city Otherness.

To illustrate how these spatial dimensions of colonial racisms make aboriginal youth feel "out of place" this thesis attends to how this group experiences stereotypes of the anachronistic Indian. Post-colonial scholars have highlighted how colonial temporalities forever condemn indigenous peoples to an earlier time and space from where they can make no meaningful claim to land that has since been occupied and colonized by European populations (McClintock, 1995, Appadurai, 1988). My research illustrates how aboriginal youth challenge this colonial temporality through their performance of a post-colonial hybridization.

According to Robert Young (1995), hybridization consists

> of the forcing of a single entity into two or more parts, a severing of a single

> object into two, turning sameness into difference…[It] makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different (26).

Through its simultaneous exhibition of similarity and difference the hybrid undermines processes of colonial identification that utilize immutable markers of difference to reveal the truth of racial affiliations (Mohanram, 1999). This thesis explores how aboriginal youth incorporate indigenous cultural practices into their hip-hop performances. They do so in a manner that disrupts their subjection to colonial stereotypes. Through their performance of hip hop, the instructors re-stage the sign of aboriginality in the present cultural landscape. These acts of cultural hybridization contest Canadian symbols of authority that typically consign aboriginal youth to anachronistic spaces. Through this performance, the colonial temporality that would otherwise disavow aboriginal peoples' claims to Canadian land is unsettled as the past is renewed and refigured in what Bhabha describes as "a contingent in-between space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present" (Bhabha, 1994: 339). By bringing these post-colonial concepts to the study of the colonial racisms I convey the often ambivalent ways in which aboriginal youth understand themselves, a task which is made possible by use of an ethnographic research design.

An Ethnographic Research Design

This thesis uses ethnography to excavate the exclusionary systems of meaning that comprise the social spaces occupied by inner city youth. Ethnographies employ the self as an instrument of knowledge that encourages the researcher to witness relations as they occur in a particular social space (Katz, 1997).

To affect an ethnographic understanding of a particular social space the researcher must,

> submit himself to the fire of action *in situ*;[…] put his own organism, sensibility, and incarnate intelligence at the epicentre of the array of material and symbolic forces that he intends to dissect; […][and] strive to acquire the appetites and the competences that make the diligent agent in the universe under consideration (Wacquant, 2004: viii).

During my fieldwork I exposed myself, my body and my position within White middle-classed social space to the contingent set of social meanings that inner city youth employ to make sense of themselves and their surroundings (Goffman, 1989). Here I was able to witness how youth negotiate exclusionary systems of meaning, not as acts of intellectual cognition, but as a part of their routine practice(s) (Bourdieu, 2000). This has enabled my communication of how colonial modes of identification constitute a regular part of everyday life for youth living in inner city spaces

For five hours each weekday I immersed myself in the flow of material and symbolic forces that constituted the social space of the youth centre. My primary responsibility during this time was to provide the hip-hop instructors with whatever materials and support they required to run the program effectively. This meant that I had to occasionally act as a liaison between the instructors and the Centre staff; make certain the instructors had access to all of the equipment they required; and assist them with supervision of youth who were participating in the program. Yet, because the instructors seldom required my assistance, I spent the majority of my time at the Centre engaging in recreational activities that were conducive to participatory interaction with youth (i.e. billiards, badminton and video games). In so doing I absorbed myself in the same social spaces in which many racialized youth regularly negotiate colonial racisms and exclusionary constructions of youth and space.

After each five hour work-shift I recorded all of the relevant social interactions to which I had been witness in a spiral notebook that I took to and from the Centre. I chose not to record these observations while I was at the Centre. This would have limited my ability to participate in the daily interactions of the Centre and thereby encumber my ethnographic understanding of this space (Wacquant, 2004). When I felt that a particular turn of phrase or conversation was particularly compelling I removed myself to a private space where I could write down all of the (important) details of this interaction. During my first week of fieldwork I made sure to also record details about the physical space of the Centre, even taking digital photographs of its different areas to communicate how these spaces were arranged. As I acquired a more comprehensive understanding of this social space I became selective as to which details I recorded. Eventually I came to focus on the different conceptions of race, youth, space, and violence that were enacted in the routine interactions of people who frequented the Centre.

As a principal organizer of the hip-hop program I was able to observe and occasionally participate in the daily instruction of hip-hop. This experience has allowed me to convey an ethnographic understanding of how some aboriginal youth approach their practice of hip-hop. The bulk of my participation in the hip-hop program happened during one of the instructors' daily lessons about the messages contained in underground hip-hop records. These casual discussions usually consisted of Julia playing different vinyl records selected by her hip-hop pupils with whom she would engage about the meanings presented in the artist's lyrics, music, or album cover. In instances that she wanted to convey the importance of a particular artist or song Julia would speak in an aside to me. At this point she would typically relate an album cover or a particular lyric to her practice of hip-hop or the racisms experienced by aboriginal youth. I also learned about the instructors' practice of hip-hop through detailed observation of their breakdance lessons and breakdance performances. This revealed the different ways they incorporated more traditional aboriginal practices into hip-hop.

I also collected data through an unstructured interview with the principal hip-hop instructor whose stoic demeanour and physically-demanding style of instruction made it difficult to understand how he approached the practice of hip-hop. I utilized an unstructured style of interview in this instance because it was best suited to maintaining the comfortable rapport we had established while delivering the program. Toward the end of my fieldwork I met with him at a public place away from the Centre where we were able to discuss how he had experienced colonial racisms; how and why he practices hip-hop; and how his practice of hip-hop affects his relation to systemic colonial racisms. I also used this interview as a means to corroborate and clarify many of the observations and inferences that I made about his practice of hip-hop during my fieldwork.

To help communicate how the instructors approach their practice of hip-hop I have included lyrics from music played by the instructors during their instruction. Lyrics written by aboriginal hip-hop artists would have best aided my exploration of how the instructors understood and articulated their aboriginality through hip-hop; yet, because only one of the hip-hop instructors was an Emcee I was not witness to the different ways that aboriginal rappers express themselves through hip-hop. Since I was present when the instructors engaged with young people about different hip-hop artists I am able convey how the instructors understand and appropriate the music of Black artists to construct meaning specific to their own experiences with colonial racisms (Lashua, 2005, Krims, 2000).

This ethnographic research design is especially well-suited to each set of research questions I explore in this thesis. Most scholars have analyzed the musical and lyrical content of hip-hop without attending to the different ways that young audiences understand, appropriate, and contest the meanings that comprise this musical form of expression (Lashua, 2005). I was able to engage with the instructors as they explained the significance of a particular lyric or breakdance-move. This allows me to convey how aboriginal youth actively negotiate the different systems of meaning that comprise hip-hop as a part of their routine practice of hip-hop (Krims, 2000).

Immersed in the social space of the Centre I (reflexively) participated in the dynamic contest of categorization that is waged to ensure the order of the Centre is perceptibly different from the danger and disorder of the street. In fact, as I unwittingly took on the responsibilities of a Centre supervisor I came to rely on many of the same colonial forms of visibility that staff employ to police the space of the Centre. In Chapter One I illustrate how I came to approach childhood as a signifier of dependence and incompetence that rendered young people in need of my protection. I later interrogate my participation in the disciplining of youth to evidence how I also came to perceive aboriginality as a sign of menace and trouble. It is this reflexive analysis of my participation in the supervision of the Centre that helps me effectively illustrate how classed, gendered and raced conceptions of danger and safety animate the production of safe space at the Centre.

The ethnographic research design that I have utilized is well-suited to my exploration of how colonial racisms operate as modes of subjectification in inner city spaces (Wacquant, 2002, Katz, 1997). Positioned in a space where youth must routinely negotiate their racialized identities I was witness to the multiple, even contradictory ways that youth articulate, embody, and refuse stereotyped conceptions of Whiteness and aboriginality. Unlike most research on racialized youth that relies on data gathered through semi-structured interviews and textual analyses, I attempted to minimize the "ecological fallacy" that hinders similar research. This means that I do not have to approach these colonial racisms in a manner that abstracts them from the context in which they were enacted. Rather, I can attend to these modes of subjectification as social *processes* that permeate the daily interactions of inner city youth (Wacquant, 2004, 2002, Bhabha, 1994, Goffman, 1989).

Yet, this ethnographic research design encumbered my ability to convey how inner city youth negotiate the colonial systems of meaning to which they are subject. Because I was unable to simply evacuate my subject position, all of my observations were filtered through my identity as a White middle-class male researcher (Fine, 1998). Informed by my lived experiences in privileged colonial spaces, this research could potentially render youth visible through ethnocentric stereotypes that bear little relation to their daily lives in inner city space. For instance, at the end of each day of fieldwork I was able to return to my middle-classed space of privilege unfettered by the processes of spatial immobilization that consign aboriginal youth to impoverished inner city spaces. Ethnographers who employ their own ethno-cultural ideas of civility and order to understand "Other" populations have long been central to the edification of colonial discourses (Vidich and Standford, 1998). I have tried to ensure my thesis research did not merely reproduce colonial relations of power by remaining vigilant about how my observant participation in this space was shaped by my own privileged conceptions of youth, order and morality.

Yet, in a number of instances, the (impotent) guilt I felt about my culpability in colonial structures encumbered my participatory immersion in this social space. Wary of my position as a White ethnographer I was hesitant to participate fully in lessons about break-dance and free-styling because I did not want to appear insincere to the instructors or embarrass myself in front of youth. Instead of becoming a part of this program, I watched the instructors from a safe distance where my ability to observe them and my status as the researcher would not be perturbed by my immersion in their instruction.

During my first week of fieldwork most of the Centre staff quickly came to regard me as another supervisor who was capable of watching over youth. I readily accepted this role because I felt it would affect my inclusion in the social space of the Centre. Most of the youth whose experiences I was interested in understanding thereafter approached me as part of a White, classed authority that was charged with ensuring their conformity to the rules of the Centre. This immediately limited my ability to engage with youth about how they experience the practices of surveillance and supervision that are meant to produce safe space at the Centre. In fact, as I accepted more supervisory responsibilities I came to rely on many of the characteristic forms of visibility that staff employ to keep youth safe from the perceived dangers of the inner city streets. In so doing, I may have unavoidably reinforced many of the colonial, exclusionary systems of meaning that I have sought to understand and critique.

Layout for the Thesis

This thesis is framed by three of the different ways that inner city youth have come to understand colonial processes of identification. Chapter One explores how different classed conceptions of childhood animate the production and use of space at the Centre. It first shows how idealized conceptions of childhood that are alien to the experiences of inner city youth underlie Centre organizers' attempts to generate safe space for youth. It then illustrates how, when attempting to preserve the innocence of children from the dangers of inner city space, staff conjure the very dangers they try to expel. I conclude this chapter by conveying the multiple ways that youth routinely contest this hegemonic use of space by exhibiting their embodiment of the street lifestyle within the confines of the Centre.

Chapter Two traces the different encounters that aboriginal youth have with colonial racisms that relegate their difference to stereotyped identities. It employs post-colonial theorizations of the stereotype to convey how these youth experience their visible difference through colonial stereotypes. First it examines how aboriginal youth experience the self-aggrandizement of Whiteness in contemporary popular culture. It then focuses on how mass-mediated representations of the Frontier Indian render aboriginality a quality that is out of place in contemporary Canadian social space. This chapter then attends to the spatial dimensions of colonial racisms through an examination of the different ways that aboriginal youth are made to feel "out of place" in settler spaces of Whiteness. In the final section of this chapter I illustrate how encounters with police officers lead many aboriginal youth to experience their aboriginality as a quality that is naturally subject to the Canadian Authority.

Chapter Three examines how aboriginal youth subvert colonial racisms through their performance of hybridized hip-hop. It outlines how the philosophy of positivity that animates the instructors' practice of hip-hop differs from the gangster ethic that underlies mainstream practice. I draw on post-colonial theorizations of hybridity to examine how the instructors' incorporation of aboriginal cultural practices into their performance of hip-hop undermines processes of colonial identification that would otherwise consign aboriginality to anachronistic spaces.

Chapter One: Protecting a Preservable Childhood: Fashioning "Safe" Space through the Exorcism of Inner City Dangers

"When a child is so recklessly, wantonly put at risk…it demands an overwhelming response from all of us"

–Toronto Police Chief Bill Blair, following the accidental shooting death of a young child, 2005.

"When I was very young, I went to a grade school in New York City called St. Bart's for Boys. We used to call it the fortress, that's because the outside of the building looked like a medieval fort. But in fact it was an oasis, right in the middle of my neighbourhood. The brothers and sisters were very strict. My butt caught the bamboo more than a few times. But, I didn't hate it, I didn't hate it. 'Cause the rules made me feel important, they made me feel worth protecting. I felt safe. [And then] I went to a Jesuit high school, St. Nascius. The Jesuits taught me how to think. I haven't felt safe since.

-Detective Frank Pembleton, Homicide Life on the Street, Episode 3.02 "Fits Like a Glove," 1994.

Policy-makers and community-stakeholders have typically imagined North American inner cities as spaces of unremitting violence and disorder that are too dangerous for youth to occupy (Wacquant, 2004, Robinson, 2000). This perception of inner city space has been marshalled to secure programs and policies that will protect youth from the ruinous influence of the street (Kelly, 2003). Started by philanthropic seniors who sought to provide youth an alternative to the streets, Crystal Kids Youth Centre was similarly established to "give inner city youth a better chance by providing recreational activities in a safe environment" (Crystal Kids Youth Centre Mission Statement). This Centre targets its services at what it perceives to be an "at risk" population of youth, which, by virtue of their residence in inner city space, is presumed to have limited opportunities for pro-social advancement.

In this chapter I first demonstrate that the Centre organizers' efforts to create a safe space for youth only serves to protect a particular *conception* of childhood - one that embodies innocence, dependence, and incompetence (Valentine 1997, Valentine, 1996). This ideal of childhood is evoked by Centre organizers as a rationale for their production of the Centre as a space that is capable of excluding the dangers of inner city space. Next I utilize the insights of recent research on surveillance and the production of urban space to evidence how Centre supervisors conjure the very dangers they seek to control and vanquish (Kelly, 2003, Staples, 2000). I argue that Centre supervisors make the dangers of inner city space visible in a manner that ensures they can still be managed and controlled. Youth then becomes a quality that *can be* salvaged from the perceived dangers of inner city space.

I then highlight the different ways that youth routinely refuse, subvert, and contest these middle-class conceptions of youth through exhibition of their potential for violence. These narratives illustrate how the (violent) dictates of inner city space remain central to the use and production of space at the Centre. This chapter ultimately demonstrates that, by expelling signs of inner city violence that are thought to endanger ideas of what childhood should entail, the staff constitute the Centre as a space of exclusion that preserves the spatial hegemony of middle-class adults (Hogeveen, 2006, Valentine 1997).

"Protecting the Promise of Childhood"

Located on a commercial strip of 118 Avenue otherwise occupied by used-car lots, pawnbrokers and churches, the Centre is visibly different than the other businesses in the neighbourhood. The Centre is housed in a newly painted blue and white building that makes it appear as a sanctuary amidst the worn and faded aesthetic of the inner city. One teenage boy who routinely attends the Centre even remarked that "this is like the only place on the street that isn't ghetto. Everywhere else is like boarded up or burned down." Plaques and posters also distinguished the space of the Centre from the impoverished appearance of the inner city streets.

Two plaques that frame the only entrance to the building mark the Centre as a space where the potential of youth will be preserved. Engraved on the first plaque, located to the left of the entrance, are the words "Hope for the future for Crystal Kids." This plaque distinguishes the Centre from the street, where hopes for the future are thought to be obfuscated by the drugs, sex, and violence that saturate inner city space (Wacquant, 2004, Wacquant, 2002). On the other plaque are the words "Through these doors, our promise for tomorrow." Refracted through an "at-risk" discourse that casts youth in a state of becoming, this plaque positions its service population in relation to certain preferred adult futures that are thought to exemplify the promise symbolized by youth and childhood (Hogeveen, 2006, Kelly, 2000). Actualization of this "promise" requires youth to enter the Centre, which both of these plaques mark as a space that is capable of preserving the hope and potential that inner city youth embody.

Posted on a wall directly above big screen televisions is the Centre's statement of beliefs. Listed last on this plaque is the belief of the Centre organizers that "every child has the potential to become a contributing citizen to society". By framing children in terms of their "potential", this organizing belief constructs youth as a space of transition into adulthood (Kelly, 2006). The Centre's gesture of positing a particular *type* of adulthood as the desired outcome of this transition warrants the mobilization of services meant to ensure inner city youth become citizens capable of "contributing" to society through their *orderly* participation in social relations (Kelly, 2003, Valentine, 1996).

Posters sponsored by different government agencies like the Alberta HIV Foundation and the Street Safety Campaign also adorn the walls of the Centre. On one of the windows facing in from the street is a poster about safe needle deposit. Featured most prominently on the poster is an image of a young girl staring directly into the camera as she crouches next to a needle she is poking indifferently with a stick. Located in direct proximity to a symbol of the inner city drug trade, the image of the young girl signifies an innocence that must be protected through increased vigilance and surveillance. Anchoring this image is text that asks its intended audience of young people "What would you do if you found a needle?" The poster's text informs children that upon finding a needle they should immediately notify the nearest adult of its location without touching it in any way. By positioning adults as the only people that are capable of safely dealing with the threat of drugs, this poster compels adult intervention into the lives of youth. It is their perceived innocence and incompetence that renders them incapable of understanding the danger posed by intravenous needle use (Kelly, 2003, Moore and Haggerty, 2001).

Also contributing to this construction of childhood as a state of preservable innocence is an anti-bullying poster featured prominently on the broom closet door next to the gymnasium entrance. Most visible on this poster is an image of a young boy resting his head on the shoulder of an adult as a single tear runs down his cheek. Next to the image on this poster is text that reads, "Fall broke his bike/ Ball broke his shoe/ Bullying broke his spirit." This anti-bullying poster suggests that children are dependent on the capacities of adults who are believed to be capable of protecting the innocence and potential that children are thought to embody (Robinson, 2000, Valentine, 1997).

These posters and plaques collectively render youth a quality that can and should be protected from the dangers that are *known* to saturate inner city streets. The street violence and illicit drugs that are thought to be emblematic of these dangers are made visible as quantities that could pervert the potential of youth. To ensure this promise that is symbolized by youth is preserved members of the staff continually work to exclude signs of inner city disorder from the space of the Centre.

"In or out!": Policing Entry into the Space of Crystal Kids

Supervisors who are charged with policing the movement of bodies between the Centre and the street outside try to create the Centre as a static space that can remain undisturbed by inner city violence and disorder. As the only point at which people can enter the building, the front foyer is the primary site of surveillance for staff charged with maintaining the safety of this space. Each time the door is opened an alarm sounds that alerts the staff to the arrival of someone from the outside. Youth who are absorbed in their routine activities typically take no notice of the signal; yet, for staff, this signal plays an integral role in maintaining the safety of youth at the Centre. Staff members are expected to immediately determine who has entered the building upon hearing the alarm sound. During one of the bi-monthly staff meetings the floor supervisor responsible for the day-to-day supervision of youth at the Centre conveyed the importance of this signal when he instructed the staff, "No matter where you are on the floor, you should be able to hear the alarm and see who's coming in. If you can't, move to somewhere that you can." The practice of paying such close attention to what penetrates the Centre helps to create the inner city streets as an alien, potentially dangerous entity that can be identified and managed through vigilant supervision and surveillance (Kelly, 2003).

Supervisors responsible for the front foyer are expected to ensure that all youth who enter the building immediately sign-in by writing their first and last names, age, address and phone number in a binder located near the entrance to the front foyer[6]. Youth who regularly attend the Centre obey this rule with relative frequency because they know that staff members who see them deviate from this routine will immediately instruct them to sign-in. Once signed-in they can choose to stay or leave without having to sign-out. The log serves a dual purpose: to keep track of how many people attend the Centre each day, and convey to potential donors the number of youth they serve on a regular basis.

The Centre space is further restricted by the stipulation that youth are not allowed to come in and out of the Centre more than once on the same day. Over the course of my fieldwork there were numerous times when, upon seeing a kid walk toward the exit, a staff member would bark at them "in or out!" One of the supervisors who grew tired of youth pleading ignorance about the rule eventually posted a sign on the exit door which informed kids that if they leave the Centre they will have to stay out for the rest of the day. This stipulation, which is intended to curb smoking habits among young teenagers, works to mitigate contact between the Centre and the street. By forcing youth to choose between the quarantined space of the Centre and the outside, it also minimizes the possibility that youth can bring the influence of the street in with them, which would perturb the static sanctuary space that staff try to create.

The task of keeping adults from the street out of the Centre is also of foremost importance to the role of the foyer supervisor. Having been reprimanded on a number of occasions for not immediately approaching unknown adults when they entered the Centre, I made sure to intervene immediately when a haggardly looking older man walked into the Centre and stumbled toward the gymnasium. Inspecting his body, I noticed that his clothes were worn, his face unshaven, his hair unwashed, and his walk erratic, all of which made him look like someone who lived on the street. Approaching the man hesitantly, I asked if I could be of assistance. The man responded in a confused, indecipherable voice that led me to believe he was on some sort of substance. After he repeated his inaudible request a number of times, I was dumbfounded as to what this man would want with the youth centre, all the while remaining concerned about the threat he posed to the safety of the children. Luckily, one of the supervisors eventually recognized the man, and pointed him upstairs to where his daughter was using one of the computers. In trying to keep youth safe from the street I had come to regard the father of a young girl as a contagion from which she needed protection. Her youth came to signify an innocence and potential that *could be* protected from the incursion of and perversion by inner city space. I positioned myself as the rational, reasonable actor capable of identifying and vanquishing threats to youth posed by the manifold dangers that inner city space has come to signify (Kelly, 2003, Staples, 2000).

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[6] Kids typically write only their first and last names, and age, which are the only details actually required for book-keeping.

Conjuring Manageable Dangers

Staff supervisors often acted as though a static opposition between the Centre and the street could be established. Yet, in their quest to quarantine youth from the deleterious influence of the inner city, staff often had to also rid the space *outside* of the Centre of all signs of inner city danger as well. For example, staff organizing activities outside of the Centre were required to take special precautionary measures to protect the safety of the participating youth. Having planned a water-fight at a public park four blocks east of the Centre, staff took extra care to ensure all of the kids arrived at the destination unharmed. On this muggy summer afternoon I arrived at the Centre just in time to hear one of the supervisors explain to all of the staff and kids how we would travel safely to our destination. “Ok everyone, listen up!” Earl shouted, “We are all going to leave as a group and arrive at the park as a group.” He then proceeded to tell everyone that to arrive at the park *safely*, all of the children needed to walk between the adults as we travel along 118 Avenue, directing them that “You all have to stay between these two groups and if you’re not, there will be a problem.” Upon exiting the Centre we walked down 118 Avenue to the park as one group with all of the kids couched between both groups of adults- meant, of course, to serve as bastions of safety from the street. To arrive at the park we had to pass a corner on which men routinely solicit sex from women and a building where dope is regularly dealt. Yet, as we walked through a neighbourhood known to be one of the most dangerous in Edmonton all of the kids remain engaged with one another. Some of them played tag and others argued, while the adults stood watch to ensure the youth’s safety was preserved.

Wary of the children’s abilities to navigate the dangers of inner city space the staff felt it necessary to walk to the park as a group. This created a mobile safe space between adults who were thought to be more capable of negotiating the perceived disorder of the streets (Robinson, 2000, Valentine, 1997). Their capacity to protect themselves ignored and undermined, the youth participating in the water fight were subject to the “benevolent” interventions of rational, competent adults

(Kelly, 2006, Kelly 2003). In acting as though we were more capable of navigating the dangers of this space, we reinforced the perception that children's competence is "incomplete". This gesture in turn obscured the widely known fact that most youth who attend the Centre must routinely negotiate inner city space without any adult assistance (Valentine, 1996).

On a different outing with analogous circumstances, another supervisor and I accompanied six youth to an Edmonton Oilers game. We grew concerned about the well-being of two teenage boys when they did not meet back with us at the established time and place. After waiting twenty minutes, we reluctantly decided to leave the two boys to their own devices, in anticipation that they could find their own way home. Once we proceeded back to the Centre, the other supervisor noticed one of the "errant" boys riding his bike. This led her to remark: "Well, at least we know they were able to find their way back safely." Both of these boys who had to navigate inner city space everyday were far more familiar with the contours of this area than two adults who return to the comfort of middle-class spaces at the end of each work day. That both of us would believe these teenagers required our capacities to ensure their safety denied the spatial competencies these youth have developed navigating inner city space each day. Able to reflexively identify certain spaces as safe and others as violent and scary, most youth who attend the Centre can "safely" navigate urban terrain otherwise thought to be too dangerous for them to inhabit (Robinson, 2000, Valentine, 1996).

Aware that two of the street corners nearest to the Centre are hubs for the sex trade in Edmonton, certain supervisors take extra care to ensure the area surrounding the Centre is purified of visible signs of inner city disorder. During my first two weeks of fieldwork I watched as supervisors wrote down the license plates of trucks they believed were engaged in the solicitation of prostitution. On another occasion, a supervisor ran to the front window of the Centre to observe a woman dressed in a tank-top and leather skirt get into a truck that had just pulled into the parking lot across the street. After declaring with determination that "I'm *so* going to get it this time," he remarked: "It's a full-time job you know." Thinking he was referring to the woman, I asked "what, prostitution?" "No," he replied, "taking down licence plates." These practice of surveillance, which are undertaken to eventually rid the space outside of the Centre of visible reminders of the sex trade, cast vehicles as signs of prostitution that must be vigilantly monitored. In the process supervisors also naturalize the surveillance of women they believe are prostitutes. In fact, women seen loitering outside of the Centre are typically approached as contagions from which the children need protection (Pratt, 2005, Kelly, 2003, Poptke, 2003).

During my two months of fieldwork there were two occasions when staff members left the building to check-up on kids that were believed to be interacting with women working in the sex trade. On one afternoon, when I had been left in charge of the front foyer, I answered a phone call from the administrative assistant who had observed one of the Centre youth chatting with a woman she believed to be a prostitute. Worried for the safety of the young boy Carmen asked me to ensure he was not in any danger. When I went outside to survey the perimeter of the building, I did not see the woman or the young boy. This absence sparked concerns about his safety and whereabouts until he appeared later that evening. A week after this incident, I observed a few kids from the Centre talking to two women on one of the corners known to be frequented by women soliciting sex. Recalling the instances that I had observed staff keeping suspicious adults away from children at the Centre, I felt the need to intervene, to rip these kids away from the danger and disorder "these" women signified. But as I watched how unaffected the children were by women from whom I thought they needed protection, I felt ashamed. These kids could be related to this woman whom I had assumed to be a part of the sex trade. Even more discomforting was my realization that, in trying to keep youth at the Centre safe, I had come to relegate women I identified as prostitutes to mere signifiers of potential danger.

Women thought to be prostitutes are visible to Centre staff as threats to the safety of children and as a danger to the sanctity of the purified space of the Centre. Perceived as "dangerous, disruptive sexual women," prostitutes are judged to be beyond the parameters of safety established at the Centre because their "potential" has already succumbed to the ruinous effect of inner city space (Pratt, 2005, Bullen and Kenway, 2004, Skeggs, 1997). Because they are deemed incapable of managing the danger these women represent to their own safety, children are thought to be in need of intervention from the staff who, in turn, act as though the promise symbolized by youth can be quarantined from the danger these women signify.

In an effort to keep youth away from the illegal narcotics that are known to saturate inner city space, certain staff members subject the area directly outside the Centre to constant surveillance. One staff member in particular routinely patrolled the perimeter of the building to keep an eye out for "any sort of trouble." Teresa used her smoke breaks to keep tabs on the drug house that operated out of what appeared to be an abandoned building next to the Centre. Upon returning from her walks she would jot down the license plates of any vehicles she observed parked outside of the dope house. She would routinely hand these over to a community police officer who dropped by the Centre. In subjecting the business of this identified drug house to surveillance, Teresa acted as if the space surrounding the Centre could be cleansed of the drug problem. Surveillance practices made the threat posed by the drug trade *seem* manageable, as something that can be identified and expelled from areas that are frequented by youth (Kelly, 2003, Staples, 2000, Skeggs, 1997).

For example, staff members became particularly concerned about the threat posed by the drug house when one of the supervisors noticed a woman sitting in the alley behind the building. After calling the police, who subsequently removed the woman from the area, the executive director came out of his office to update staff on the "situation". He explained that a woman they believed to be a prostitute was strung out behind the building. Conveying the purported gravity of the situation, Cindy explained, "Yeah, and she was shaking. She's probably just coming down [off of crystal methamphetamines]." Initially exclaiming "who knows what she'll do!" Earl qualified his angered judgement, adding "I mean do whatever, but this is a youth centre for god's sake!" Staff framed the suspected prostitutes' location directly outside the building as a breach of the safe space sought by the Centre organizers (Valentine, 1997). Rendered "out of place" in the alley, the woman was expelled by authorities who legitimated the claim to this space made by the Centre staff who felt her visible disorderliness endangered the safety of the Centre.

Targeting signs of inner city attachment

Many youth who attend the Centre embody and display signs of danger targeted for exclusion from the Centre. Often perceived as threats to the safety of youth these signs of attachment to inner city space become sites of contestation as members of the staff try to render them excludable from the safe space of the Centre. For instance, signs of drug use are targeted for expulsion by staff members who routinely ask children wearing clothing with marijuana leaves to either to take the article of clothing off or turn it inside out. I have also watched as supervisors ask teenagers to take cigarettes out from behind their ears. When suspicious of a particular kids' behaviour, supervisors looked directly into their eyes to determine if their pupils were dilated or their eyes "too" white -either of which would be taken as evidence of their recent use of marijuana. In the one instance that a supervisor concluded someone had smoked pot, the thirteen-year old boy was told to leave the Centre and banned from returning for three days. In these confrontations the perceived need to cleanse the Centre of signs of drug use rendered the bodies of youth subject to middle-class adult surveillance. By making these signs of drug use visible, and thereafter expelling them from the space of the Centre, staff members acted as though youth can be kept from the danger posed by the drug trade in inner city spaces (Kelly, 2003, Moore and Haggerty, 2001).

Signs of sexuality are also rendered out of place in the Centre, as their presence is thought to jeopardize the innocence and potential symbolized by youth.

This was made especially evident at a meeting between the parties responsible for delivering the hip-hop program. On this occasion, two of the supervisors attributed the failure of a previous program to the instructors' refusal to wear "age-appropriate" clothing. One of the supervisors explained that "she would come scantily clad and we'd tell her, 'you know, you need to dress differently.'" Imitating the voice of the young woman, he continued to recreate the confrontation, saying "well, this is what I wear at the club.' And I'm like: 'Yeah, but this is a bunch of 13 year olds. Many of these kids see their moms, cousins, sisters dress like this when they go out for a night on the town.'" For this staff member the sexuality displayed by the dance instructor signified the dangerous saturation of sex that he believed youth routinely encounter in their everyday lives in the inner city. Thought to endanger the innocence of youth which the Centre has set out to preserve, these signs of sexuality are targeted by staff who seek to cleanse this space of inner city dangers.

Young women who wear clothing that exposes 'too much' skin are often asked to cover themselves up or change their clothing out of concern that such displays of sexuality will attract the potentially dangerous attention of young men. In one instance, a teenage girl wearing a low-cut tank top was told to put on a sweater when a number of boys were observed trying to look up her shirt. Subject to a gendered form of responsibility, this young woman was held to account for the potential violence that could be visited upon her body. She was therefore visible in terms of "the only form of capital young women can trade on…their body, their sexuality, and their fertility" (Bullen and Kensway, 2004: 148).

Signs of gang membership displayed on the bodies of youth are also contested by supervisors. Upon entering the building youth are expected to remove all clothing that could be perceived as "gang colours" -usually bandanas of certain colours. During my second week of fieldwork at the Centre I watched as a young aboriginal male was told to remove a black bandana tied around his head. The supervisor admonished, "no colours in the Centre!" The research on youth gangs and organized crime indicates that youth whose gang membership is so highly visible are most often members of wannabe gangs that "band together in a loosely structured group to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive, criminal activity" (Gordon, 1997: 87). Expelling signs of gang membership merely makes the threat of inner city danger *seem* manageable. This allows staff to proceed as if the perceived threat of violence posed by gangs has been extinguished.

Semi-regular bulletins about trends in gang dress issued by the Edmonton Police Service inform how staff members perceive and identify signs of gang membership. In the one update to which I had access readers are instructed to perceive nearly any *visible* similarity in clothing or body modification as a sign of gang involvement. By this dubious logic any group of youth that all wear the same colour hat or same style of shoes should be approached as a potentially violent gang. The emphasis placed on the danger posed by aboriginal gangs in these updates projects the potential for violence onto the bodies of any group of young men who appear aboriginal. Aboriginal youth are thereafter rendered subject to heightened surveillance, a colonial process of racialization that I explore in more detail in Chapter Three.

“I’d rather fight than Die”: Staying Safe by Projecting the Potential for Violence

Desirous of a place where youth can reclaim their innocence and potential, supervisors attempt to fashion the Centre as a static, elevated space that will not be perturbed by the violence and disorder of the inner city streets. In an online informational slideshow about the Centre, organizers allege that this safe haven “allows these young people to be children, which is in sharp contrast to their lives outside the Centre” (http://www.crystalkids.org/). Purported to free youth of the concerns that dictate their lives outside of the Centre, this sanctuary space is thought to *return* youth to an ideal, carefree state of childhood. Here they are believed able to (re)gain their innocence, immaturity, and dependence on the capacities of adults. One of the Centre supervisors hinted at this ideal state of childhood when he reacted in shock to the amount of time a young teenage girl had to work at the local carnival, declaring “You’re thirteen: you shouldn’t be working! The only thing you should have to worry about is having fun!” Yet, most youth who attend the Centre have never experienced childhood as a carefree state of emotional immaturity. Typically, they are burdened by household and childcare responsibilities because their parents work multiple jobs. Some are even forced to look after their younger siblings while they are at the Centre.

This attempt to quarantine the potential of inner city youth is continually undermined by the ways that youth bring the imminent violence of the street into the Centre. Safe negotiation of inner city space for many youth involves projection of a street tough exterior, which they routinely convey in the Centre through display of their potential for violence (Robinson, 2000). During snack time on my third day of fieldwork at the Centre I overheard a ten year old boy tell one of his friends that "[i]f he'd 'a' stolen *my* bike, me and my crew would have jumped him," a declaration which he subsequently corrected by declaring "naw, I'd have *killed* him." By exhibiting his capacity for violence in the space of the Centre, this boy undermined the production of space that is supposed to exclude the economy of toughness and violence that often govern life in inner city spaces.

On another occasion, a nine-year old boy named Jesse conveyed his potential for violence to me and another boy his age when he approached us and declared in half-jest "I could beat up anyone in here!" Always eager to engage his antics, I asked if he could beat up all of the staff as well. He answered my goading question with a straight-faced nod of his head. Not finished posturing, Jesse proceeded to ask me in a challenging tone, "Are you a man?" After I responded in the affirmative, still in amused disbelief at this young boy's bravado, Jesse pointed to the young boy beside me and declared, "He's a wuss. He won't even fight me." Upon the other boy responding with a schoolyard "so?" Jesse shot back, "So you wouldn't fight, even if someone started hitting you?" Once he received the answer of "no" he expected, Jesse asked: "Even if they were going to *kill* you?" Defiant, Alex replied, "I still wouldn't fight." Their argument now at a stalemate, Jesse stated plainly, "Well I'd rather fight than die," a remark he punctuated by strutting away.

In this (staged) confrontation, Jesse conflated masculinity with an enhanced capacity to inflict violence as he dismissed any reluctance to fight as a sign of weakness. Most young men at the Centre also disavow of weakness as being "gay" or "girly". Bound to certain modes of masculine recreation that will not undermine their performance of a (violence-) saturated masculinity, young men regularly exhibit their cultivation of a street tough exterior while in the space of the Centre. In making known that he would wield violence if threatened, Jesse once again brought the dictates of (violent) inner city space into the Centre. In so doing he conveys his refusal to occupy conceptions of childhood thought to be antithetical to the experience of violence (Kelly, 2003).

While in the space of the Centre, young women also conveyed their use of violence as a means to negotiate the dangers of inner city space (Messerschmidt, 2004). On one afternoon, two twelve years old kids who regularly attend the Centre escalated a half hour of name calling when Arty decided to jab Calli with a nearby pool cue. Angered, Calli yelled, "you stupid kid, want to take this outside?" as she punched her fist into her other hand. Shrugging off the potential affront to his masculinity that would be affected by losing a fight to a girl, Arty rebutted, "You'll just get all your friends. That's what native kids always do." Angry at the suggestion that her aboriginality somehow made her weaker, Calli retorted, "No way, I fight my own fights. My *fists* make me a woman." Here Calli identified her capacity to inflict violence as an indispensable aspect of her identity as a woman. In so doing she eschewed hegemonic conceptions of femininity that render women *naturally* subject to the violent force of masculinity. Calli's potential for violence is experienced, not as a quality that can be quarantined from the Centre, but as an embodied capacity that is differentially displayed as she vacillates between the space of the Centre and the street outside. In this confrontation Calli proposed to take their conflict "outside" where their use of violence would not result in long-term expulsion from the Centre, imagining the street and the Centre as spaces that can be moved between. She highlights how the Centre is produced through young people's oscillation between the imminence of inner city space and the middle-classed expectations of Centre supervisors (Poptke, 2003).

Also central to the projection of a street tough exterior is a disavowal of any sort of dependence on others, especially adults. This was made evident when a nine-year old boy, who was reputed to be one of the toughest kids at the Centre, refused an offer of help extended by a staff member after his behavior at the pawnbroker next door landed him in trouble with staff at the Centre. According to the cashier who reported his transgressions to one of the supervisors, Chuck and a number of his friends had been loitering in her store. Upon being asked to buy something or leave the young boy angrily instructed her to "suck my dick, bitch!" Having taken him and his usual posse aside to address this incident, one of the supervisors told Chuck that to be allowed back into the Centre he would have to write the employee an apology letter. The staff member explained that she could help him write the letter, a benevolent offer of help that Chuck vehemently refused, instead hollering "fuck you bitch, I don't need your help!"

The supervisor perceived Chuck's childhood as a signifier of incompetence that renders him dependent on the benevolent interventions of rational, competent adults. Yet, were he to have accepted her offer of assistance, Chuck would have had to assume his dependence on (adult) others in front of friends who regularly exhibit admiration for his toughness and reputation for violence. Through his vehement refusal of the supervisor's offer, Chuck re-asserted his independence and toughness, making known that he has no use for the benevolence of adults. The space of the Centre is purported to free young people from their concerns with the violence they encounter in inner city space and rely upon the superior capacities of adults. Chuck defied this formulation of space by communicating to both staff and his posse of friends that he had no use for the help of adult others; in a sense, refusing the ideal of childhood that staff want to protect.

Conclusion

The Centre undoubtedly fulfills an important function in the lives of inner city youth who do not have (free) access to space where they can *be* without the fear of immediate physical harm (Robinson, 2000). But, when access to this space is limited by restrictive ideals of what childhood should entail, inner city youth are rendered excludable from space that should be fashioned to include and value their different capacities and experiences (Gallacher, 2005, Valentine, 1997). In disavowing their agency, Centre organizers act not to maintain the safety of youth, but rather to deliver the innocence of youth from its potential perversion by the dangers of inner city space. Yet, in so doing, Centre organizers act as though space can be precisely managed and controlled. This obscures the different ways that inner city youth treat this space as porous, variable and pliable (Popke, 2003). For instance, in their vacillations between the street and Centre, inner city youth routinely encounter colonial racisms that permeate these differently produced spaces. In the next Chapter I explicate how urban aboriginal youth experience these colonial encounters with a stereotyped aboriginality that is meant to bind them to stigmatized identities and impoverished spaces (Razack, 2002b). In showing how these stereotypes permit the disavowal of the colonial violence to which aboriginal people remain subject, I extend my concern with the manners by which exclusionary, colonial forms of visibility warrant the maintenance of middle-class, spaces of Whiteness.

Chapter Two: Enduring "Lord Whitey"[7]: Inner City Youth and their Encounters with Stereotyped Aboriginality

> "There is a quest for the Negro, the Negro is a demand, one cannot get along without him, he is needed, but only if he is made palatable in a certain way. Unfortunately the Negro knocks down the system and breaks the treaties."
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> -Fanon, 1967

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[7] As I discuss in this chapter, an Indigenous young man who regularly attends the Centre addressed me as "Lord Whitey" when I "unduly" sided with White youth during conflicts at the Centre.

Racist stereotypes that cast people of aboriginal descent as criminal, alcoholic, and anachronistic remain central to the preservation of colonialism in Canada. A wide array of scholarship has evidenced how stereotypes of "the Indian" justify the intensive spatial and legal regulation of aboriginal peoples (Mawani, 2003, Mawani, 2000, Razack, 2002a). This chapter explicates how these colonial stereotypes continue to structure the lives of aboriginal youth living in Canadian urban centres. Operating through a paradoxical mode of representation referred to as *fixity*, stereotypes arrest the play of difference in a system of representation such that a particular object is at once already "in place" and yet also in need of constant repetition (Young, 1995, Bhabha, 1994). Interested in the multiplicative ways that youth encounter these stereotypes, I show how colonial matrixes of power are maintained by making aboriginality visible as an identifiable difference. In so doing, I attend to the stereotype as a mode of discursive representation, which, in acting as a median category between the colonizers and the colonized, renders the Other invisible and yet conveniently knowable and governable (Dutta, 2004, Bhabha, 1994).

This chapter illustrates how aboriginal youth who attend the Centre most often experience their identified racial difference in colonial encounters that render it a signifier of danger, alcoholism, and anachronism. I show that, like the stereotyped "Negro" of whom Fanon (1967) spoke, this inferiorizing stereotype is fundamental to the maintenance of (White) Canadian social space. First I examine how aboriginal youth experience the celebration of Whiteness that is staged in the mediums of popular culture in which they are invested. This allows me to evidence how mass-mediated depictions of indigenous peoples typically render aboriginality a sign of anachronism. Then I attend to the distinctly spatial elements of colonial racisms to illustrate how aboriginal youth are made to feel "out of place" outside of impoverished Native spaces. I conclude this chapter by showing how the stereotype of the criminal Indian works to encircle aboriginal youth within a criminalized difference. By constructing aboriginal people as a population in need of Western intervention, these stereotypes legitimize the violent occupation of the land now mapped as Canada and justify the erection of social services and systems of administration needed to deal with "the Indian problem" (Hogeveen, 2005, Anderson, 1999). As these stereotypes abrogate Canadian Whiteness to a position of judging authority, youth of aboriginal descent are rendered at once subject to Canadian Authority and *naturally* excludable from the rights of an otherwise Canadian, White liberal democratic subject (Gill, 2003).

Encountering a Mass-Mediated, Self-Reverent Whiteness

While at the Centre, inner city youth regularly evidence their investment in the different mediums of popular culture. Conversations between the adolescent boys and girls who lay claim to the billiards table routinely include recreations of scenes they find humorous from television shows like "The Family Guy", "That 70's Show", and "South Park". In the upstairs computer lab young women often use their coveted half hour of computer time to watch the trendiest music videos by artists like Beyonce, Ciara, Usher, Mariah Carey and Missy Elliott. The older teenage boys concerned with projecting a street tough image even betray their investment in popular culture when they wear clothing from the G-Unit Clothing

Line created by the rapper 50 Cent. By showing these signs of investment, youth also evidence their identification with popular culture mediums and figures that are structured by racisms that construe Whiteness as the norm against which everything is routinely compared (Lutz and Lee, 2005, Keith, 2000).

Most of the television shows watched and discussed by youth at the Centre position White characters as the protagonists with which (young) audiences are to identify and in whom they are meant to invest their energies (Keith, 2000). For example, "That 70's Show", which is one of the most quoted shows amongst youth at the Centre, follows the exploits of five regular teenagers as they "hang out" in suburban Wisconsin in the 1970s[8]. Offering comic relief to the four White teenagers is the character Fez, a Latin American teenager whose simultaneous exhibition of heightened sexual drive and bumbling incompetence serves as the butt of different jokes which resonate with colonial stereotypes that cast Latinos and non-Whites as hypersexual and unintelligent. Fez, quite simply, serves to magnify the difference between him and the White characters who are positioned as the *normal* protagonists (Bhabha, 2004, Razack, 1999, Young, 1995). Further essentializing the difference of this sole non-White character is the running joke that none of his good friends know or even care from which Latin American country he comes. His Third World origin is thus constructed as an immutable difference that sets him apart from the other White characters.

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[8] The popularity of this show became particularly evident to me when one of the louder kids at the Centre remarked that I look and act a lot like the protagonist of the show Eric Foreman. Over the next to weeks at the Centre, he and a number of his friends decided to call me "Foreman".

In popular icons like 50 Cent, Usher, and Mariah Carey, youth at the Centre encounter successful people of colour; but, these revered public figures are invariably re-presented through mainstream media channels that commoditize racial difference. In fact, most Black artists to which youth at the Centre have been exposed are packaged in ways that resonate with colonial stereotypes that cast Black Americans as innately musical, sexually predatory, dangerous, and Different (hooks, 1994). In the figure of 50 Cent, arguably the most widely admired artist amongst young boys at the Centre, inner city youth encounter a figure whose most celebrated features are his enhanced sexual prowess and his noteworthy capacity to inflict and withstand extreme amounts of violence. As I more thoroughly explicate in Chapter Four, the ubiquity of 50 Cent's presence in the lives of Centre youth not only reaffirms the centrality of violence in inner city life, but also entrenches Blackness as a signifier of danger, violence, and unmitigated sexuality (Alexander, 2005, Sernhede, 2000, Fanon, 1967).

This "orientalization" of Blackness positions Whiteness as the point of psychic identification for youth heavily invested in popular culture (Keith, 2000, Dyer, 2000, Said, 1978). For instance, on one Friday afternoon at the Centre I walked into the front foyer to find a crowd of young women gathered around one of the big screen televisions intently watching the movie "A Cinderella Story". In this Britney Spears-Generation remake of the classic fairy tale pre-teen icon Hilary Duff plays an unpopular young woman trying to navigate her way through the vices and unkindness of her high school peers, a task which is complicated by her recently developed desire for the quarterback of the school's football team. As the hero of the tale in whom the audience of young women is to invest, Duff personifies unalloyed virtue, beauty and morality, which are communicated through her unblemished Whiteness. In one particularly telling scene, Duff arrives at her school's Masquerade Ball adorned in a White gown, White mask and White shoes, all of which compliment her White skin and blonde hair. Punctuating this triumphant entrance into the gymnasium is a White spotlight that casts her out of the Dark-ness that envelops the rest of her peers who gawk in wonder as she unveils her Whiteness which is left to convey, "I am white…I possess beauty and virtue, which have *never been* black" (italics added, Fanon, 1967: 45). While watching this scene in the movie I turned to see two young aboriginal women crying quietly as they remained absorbed in this aggrandizement of Whiteness that was carefully refracted through the gendered fantasy of a young woman being saved from her life of turmoil by a chivalrous man of privilege. Upon having attention brought to her tears by a nearby staff member one of the young women proceeded to explain that, "this is just so perfect a thing for her". This response betrayed her simultaneous investment in the recreation of the classic fairy tale as well as in the deification of Whiteness this movie was staging.

As (colonial) sites of fantasy and desire, children's fictions have long proffered White heroes and Black villains as points of psychical and ideological identification (Bhabha, 1994, Fanon, 1967). The (pivotal) colonial drama is enacted through these stories when the child encounters the racial stereotype, and, in a gesture of identification with Whiteness comes to disavow her (own) type, understanding herself and her Race through a colonial lens that engenders reverence of Whiteness (Bhabha, 1994). The young women of indigenous descent engaged by "A Cinderella Story" similarly encounter Duff as the White hero of the tale. Duff's unfettered beauty and virtue, which are metonymized by her Whiteness, are given as points of total identification for young women who are to see themselves in her struggles, especially in her gendered quest to be delivered from poverty by a (White) man of higher social status[9]. Yet, in Duff, these women of colour encountered an unalloyed Whiteness that seeks total reverence of itself (Bhabha, 1994). When turning toward Duff as she unveiled her Whiteness to the Masquerade Ball these young women must also turn away from the Black-ness that envelops all of Duff's high school peers from whom she is separated by the White spotlight. Engaged by this historic conflation of darkness with impurity, disorder, and danger, these young women encountered an insidious disavowal of Black-ness and colour (Dyer, 2000, Keith, 2000, Bhabha, 1994).

"Look! It's the Indians doing their Indian Dance!" Encountering An Anachronistic Aboriginality

Absent from popular culture mediums in which youth at the Centre evidence their investment are depictions of aboriginality that do not render it a mere signifier of people from a time long since passed. The iconic figure of the frontier Indian saturates mass mediated re-presentations of indigenous peoples. Through its commemoration in Western films and schoolyard games of Cowboys and Indian, this figure has become a ubiquitous signifier of aboriginality (Francis, 1992,

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[9] Mirroring the plot of A Cinderella Story, Fanon (1967) discussed a dream that Black women frequently had in which they were delivered from colonial servitude through their marriage to a White man.

Hollingshead, 1992). While speaking of the need to dispel misconceptions about indigenous cultures Mike conveyed the effect that this ubiquity has on widespread understandings of aboriginality, explaining,

> "it's like how people look at aboriginals they see on [television] with *that* call (intimates the archetypal call used by children in games of Cowboys and Indians). That's not even a real aboriginal call. Where it came from was this man named John Ford, the one who created Westerns, [which they] called Spaghetti Westerns cause aboriginal people looked too aboriginal to be in the movie, so they got Italian people. And then John Ford never looked at the background much. I mean sure there was the (repeats archetypal call) but that
> call came from the women, men never did that. Men always had a different aboriginal call. And [the movies] always had that one drum beat (intimates archetypal drumbeat, Boomboomboomboom), you know, "the Indians are coming! The Indians are coming!" That was the stereotypical drumbeat that the media gave to aboriginal people, [cause] it was never like that. There were always different drumbeats."

In this iconic depiction of the frontier Indian Mike encounters an aggrandizing Whiteness that abrogates itself to the norm, casting him and his people as "too aboriginal" to represent themselves (Martinot, 2003b, Spivak, 1988). When filtered through a White ontology the indigenous cultural practices of which Mike spoke are refused complexity. These colonial re-presentations render aboriginal people *identifiable* through a stereotyped war call and drumbeat thrust upon them by different mediums of popular culture. In the stereotyped drumbeat of which he spoke, Mike is confronted by an aboriginality that is at once identifiable and yet also predatory and dangerous. This drumbeat is meant to signal the eventual (feared) arrival of potentially dangerous Indians, as it announces to the settlement of White Europeans that "the Indians are coming! The Indians are coming!"

Through the ubiquity of these stereotyped drumbeats and war calls in mass-mediated representations of aboriginality, people who appear aboriginal become identifiable and known through these signs of predatory Otherness. During a break dance performance a number of the instructors had staged at the Edmonton Fringe Theatre Festival, Mike overheard a group of young White men point in their direction and shout "Look! It's the Indians doing their Indian Dance!" -a declaration one of them punctuated with the stereotypical Indian call heard in Spaghetti Westerns. To these White men, Mike and his break dance crew were only visible through the stereotype of the frontier Indian of whom they had come to know in history text books, mythic representations and Western movies. Trapped in this colonial form of (in)visibility, Mike experienced his body as a discursive construct which had been provided for him by the White Other "who had woven him out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories" (Fanon, 1967a: 111-112). His caricatured aboriginality was presented to him as a sign of anachronism that anchors him to people from a time long since passed. This colonial encounter made Mike feel "out of place" in the (settler) space of Whiteness which is home to the Fringe Festival, a feeling that was elicited by the distinctly spatial dimensions of colonial racisms.

"Go Back to the Reserve!": Encountering An Immobilized Aboriginality

Over the last thirty years impoverished urban areas across Canada have been mapped as racialized spaces in which aboriginality is contained (Blomley, 2003, Razack, 2002b, Mawani, 2005). When travelling outside of these inner city spaces, which are *known* to be rife with crime and poverty, aboriginal youth often experience a hyper-visibility that renders them subject to heightened derision, surveillance and control (Razack, 2002b, Fiske, 1998). Three of the older teenage boys who frequented the Centre encountered their hyper-visibility while they were loitering in an area of downtown Edmonton. As they walked across Jasper Avenue a car full of White teenagers drove by and yelled out the window, "Go back to the reserve!" Once their bodies were marked with stereotyped aboriginality these young men were made to feel "out of place" by a group of White people who regarded the downtown area of Edmonton as a (settler) space of Whiteness. Told to return to the reserve, the space to which they were thought to *naturally* belong, these young men experienced their signs of racial difference as qualities that anchor them to certain racialized spaces (Appadurai, 1998, Razack, 2002b).

A number of the hip-hop instructors encountered their hyper-visibility when a police patrol car prevented them from loading up their van with sound equipment following a performance at a nightclub near Whyte Avenue, an area of Edmonton that is mostly populated by White, middle-class University students. Interested in what grounds the police would have for suspecting them of theft, I asked why the cops would have interfered. Julia replied pointedly that "I guess it was just too hard for the police to believe that people like *us* would have *that* equipment in *that* part of town."

Like most urban spaces occupied by White consumer classes, Whyte Avenue is an area in which encounters with aboriginality are usually limited to interactions with panhandlers and beggars. Aboriginality has become a signifier of poverty, nuisance and danger for police officers charged with keeping the area safe for consumption (Razack, 2002b, Ratner, 1996). For the police officers who stopped

Julia, the spectacle of aboriginal youth loading expensive sound equipment into a van in this space of Whiteness signified the commission of a crime. Julia encountered a racist gaze that marked her body with an aboriginality that is conflated with the disreputable activities that are known to occur in inner city spaces. Enacted against a backdrop of Whiteness, this inferiorizing stereotype rendered Julia and her friends subject to heightened surveillance and control. This practice of surveillance assumed the appearance of validity because their aboriginality is uniformly perceived as a signifier of danger and criminality by people charged with maintaining the (White) space of Whyte Avenue (Martinot, 2003a).

Aboriginal youth who frequent the Centre often experience their aboriginality as a hindrance to mobility. One of the teenage boys who regularly attends the Centre encountered this stereotyped visibility when a bus driver did not pull over to pick him up at his bus stop. Having never encountered this problem myself I asked Bruce why the bus driver did not stop for him. Shooting me a look that made obvious my naivety, Bruce chimed back "'cause I look Native, duh!" Forced to walk across town when he could have taken public transportation, Bruce experienced his perceived racial difference as an obstacle to spatial mobility. He was painfully aware that his aboriginality was only visible to the bus driver as a sign of potential danger and disorder.

While in transit between the inner city and the White neighbourhood of Glenora where I lived, I witnessed different bus-drivers pass by groups of aboriginal youth on four separate occasions. In one instance I even watched as the driver of my bus refused service to a middle-aged aboriginal woman waiting at a stop that marks the passage from the inner city to the city centre. Before the woman was able to see off the White man who had been with her at the bus stop, the White bus driver loudly instructed the woman that, "[w]e can't have you coming on the bus". As *we* drove away I overheard the bus driver defend her act of exclusion, explaining to a concerned passenger that "I am not judging, we just can't have *that* coming onto the bus". The woman left behind at the stop had been rendered stationary and immobile as she encountered a stereotype that conflated her visible difference with the disreputable activities that occur in inner city space (Razack, 2002b). In leaving unearthed exactly *how* this woman posed a danger to the safety of those on the bus, the driver presumed that her markers of aboriginality and poverty were indisputable signifiers of danger and disorder.

In all of my travels to and from the Centre my whiteness had granted me the ability to move unnoticed between differently raced spaces. Unlike the racial difference that anchors aboriginal people to inner city spaces, my whiteness is "disembodied, mobile, and absent of the marks that physically immobilize the native" (Mohanram, 1999: 21-22). Because spatial mobility functions as a principal factor in the stratification of social classes, this colonial process of marking bodies with an immobilizing aboriginality works to cordon off aboriginal youth to areas known for their economies of crime and desperation (Bauman, 2001, Razack, 2002a).

Aboriginal youth comprise more than half of the service population of the Centre. This reflects the racialized composition of the surrounding Edmonton inner city neighbourhoods. In a city where people of aboriginal descent comprise only 10 percent of the general population (Alook, 2004), this disproportionate representation of aboriginal youth is evidence of the spatial exclusion that anchors many of them to "the urban reserve", a term some of the youth use to refer to the inner city area. This reference to inner city space conveys the processes of legal and social subjection that confine people of aboriginal descent to certain "Native" spaces. Through the creation of Native spaces, the racial binary that enables the exercise of colonial power is mapped onto Canadian urban landscapes. Aboriginality is entrenched as a perceptible, controllable difference (Blomley, 2003, Fiske, 1998).

While many aboriginal youth migrate to urban centres like Edmonton to find housing and employment, most find themselves constrained by colonial geographies that confine them to inner city spaces methodically geared to repress aboriginal identity, history, and culture (Ratner, 1996). In fact, inner city encounters with people who exhibit signs of stereotyped Indian-ness have a demonstrable affect on aboriginal youth who are seldom exposed to such signs outside of inner city space. Mike conveyed the effect these inner city encounters have on his understanding of aboriginality when he described how difficult it was to attend high school in the inner city, explaining that,

> "[i]t was pretty ghetto. You'd see people drinking Listerine, and it was pretty hard, cause you're aboriginal and you see someone living the stereotypical life. It's just like… "Dude! You're making our people look bad. You're giving rights to other people to say we're drunken Indians cause you're doing it."

Acknowledging that colonial stereotypes of the 'drunken Indian' affect how his aboriginality is made (in)visible, Mike encounters indigenous people engaged in substance abuse as tragic validation of this stereotype which he tries to unsettle by living a clean lifestyle and performing hip-hop for aboriginal youth (Mawani, 2003).

Encounters with inner city aboriginality entice many of the Centre youth to experience their aboriginal descent as a quality that anchors them to alcoholism and violence. During a routine game of billiards one of the teenage boys who occasionally frequented the Centre conveyed the effect of this stereotype in the telling of jokes formed around the stereotype of an unemployed, drunken Indian. Having asked if I wanted to hear an inappropriate joke, to which I agreed hesitantly, Chris asked, "why can Native guys go all night in bed when White guys can't?" Unsettled by the racist tenor of the joke, I conveyed my disapproval, declaring "[o]h no, not a racist joke!" Giving me a look that conveyed his disbelief that I would be so rigid, Chris reasoned, "but I'm Native". Complacent, I agreed, prompting him to deliver the punch line, "[i]t's 'cause the White guy has to go to work the next day!" Interpreting my uncomfortable chuckles as signs of encouragement, Chris proceeded to deliver another joke, asking, "[w]here's the best place to hide liquor from a Native?" Without pause, he delivered the punch line, "under his work boots."

A social space in which arbitrary racial distinctions are made intelligible for young people, racist jokes make visible the perceived differences of categorizable racial groups (Billig, 2001, Holdaway, 1997). In the telling of racist jokes about the out-of- work Indian Chris betrays his identification with the stereotyped aboriginality he routinely encounters in inner city spaces. These jokes attribute the widespread poverty and destitution experienced by people of aboriginal descent to their inherent alcoholism and laziness (Alfred, 2005). Left unmentioned in these jokes, however, is the violent colonization experienced by indigenous communities across the land now mapped as Canada (Blomley, 2003, Razack 2002b).

Centre youth come to know and understand their racialized self as it is refracted through inferiorizing stereotypes that make success in Canadian social spaces appear unattainable. Two teenage women made this evident when they expressed excitement about starting grade ten at a new school where they would not have to endure the racist attitudes of their previous teacher. Exemplifying the racisms to which they referred, Amanda explained that "[o]ne time, a couple of my friends and me had gone to lunch and we were a little bit late getting back, and the teacher made us go to detention. Except, we were only like two minutes later than these other kids, but they were White so they didn't get into trouble". In recollecting this unfair treatment, Amanda spoke of her aboriginality as a disadvantage that made her a more visible target for blame than kids whose Whiteness allowed them to pass by authority unnoticed.

Set apart from their (White) peers, many aboriginal youth who attend the Centre regard their identified racial difference as a hyper-visible target for derision. After witnessing me intervene in two different incidents at the Centre, each time scolding youth who are of aboriginal descent, the boy I had admonished for dirtying an arcade game objected to my supposed favouritism, instructing me to "stop protecting the White kids, lord Whitey!" In me, a White researcher who was not from the inner city neighbourhoods, this aboriginal teenager encountered a self-aggrandizing authority who sought to protect the interests of Whiteness by punishing kids who exhibited signs of aboriginal difference. For the remainder of my shift, I grew concerned that, in fulfilling my role as a supervisor, I had come to approach aboriginality as a signifier of menace and trouble, buttressing the very colonial forms of visibility that I sought to critique.

Even when in conflict with one another, youth who attend the Centre often spoke of aboriginality as an immutable difference that sets apart "White kids" from those who bear its signs of difference. In one of the incidents that I described in Chapter 2, an adolescent boy enacted an inferiorizing stereotype to dismiss an aboriginal teenage girl after she challenged him to a fight. He explained to her, as if obvious, that "you'll just get all your friends, 'cause that's what you Native kids always do." Seeing that I was about to intervene, the young boy turned to me and explained that, "if there's a native kid and a white kid fighting, the native kid will have all his friends join in cause he knows he's going to lose." This gesture of attaching a consequential importance to his opponent's racial difference renders her dependent on others, putting her at a perceptible disadvantage if she were to confront his Whiteness directly. The young boy thereby abrogates himself and the (superior) Whiteness he embodies to a position of judging authority, while allowing his masculinity to remain intact in the face of the possibility that he could be beaten up by a girl (Martinot, 2003a).

"You seem like the ruffian type or the jail type": Encountering a Criminalized Aboriginality

Known amongst law enforcement as containers of violence and disorder, inner city spaces are saturated with police officers charged with containing the threat posed by their economies of crime and desperation (Razack, 2002b, Holdaway, 1997). During my two months of travel to and from the Centre the spectacle of police power occupied a regular part of the inner city landscape. In addition to the twelve times I saw parked police cars with sirens flashing in the six blocks around the Centre, there were four separate occasions when I observed police patting down aboriginal men on the sidewalk of 118th Avenue. There was also evidence of this ubiquitous police presence at the Centre as officers routinely dropped by to inform supervisors of any pressing situations in the neighbourhood.

All of the interactions I observed between police and neighbourhood youth seemed to be structured by attempts to preserve the image of police as participants in community development. During my first month of fieldwork two officers occasionally took an eight-year old blonde girl to a nearby convenience store to buy her junk food. At a pancake breakfast held to promote local awareness about the Centre, two patrol officers in full uniform made a spectacle out of throwing a football around with an aboriginal boy, remarking to all those listening, "boy, this kid has an arm!"

Interested in how the ubiquitous presence of police in inner city space affects aboriginal youth, I asked one of the hip-hop instructors about his encounters with police. On one summer evening a number of months before, two patrol officers stopped Mike and another (aboriginal) friend as they walked down a strip of 118 Avenue a few kilometres west of the Centre. Upon request from one of the White officers, Mike *routinely* provided his Indian Status card as identification, which was run through the police scanner for a criminal record. When the White officers discovered that he did not have a criminal record Mike was accused of providing fake identification, instructed, "[y]ou're telling me you're not the right person. You can get charged with fraud!" Only upon insisting that he had in fact provided the correct identification did Mike receive an apology from the White officer who explained "Oh, you just don't seem like the type that would have a clean record. You seem like the ruffian type or the jail type."

The generalized procedure of noticing his signs of racial difference affixed Mike with behaviours and qualities thought to inhere in people from his socially identified racial category (Martinot, 2003b). Police officers who are accustomed to patrolling spaces structured by racisms often rely on the median category of the criminal Indian. Utilization of this colonial form of visibility allows police to perceive people who they have never encountered before as particular *types* of people with known traits and behaviours. Because they are immersed in a social space that prioritizes the act of noticing race this colonial approach to policing appears reasonable (Sexton and Martinot, 2003, Holdaway, 1997). These police often do encounter aboriginal people with criminal records, allowing them to remain confident in the validity of this visual procedure (Martinot, 2003a).

With priority so emphatically given to his racial origin, Mike became invisible as his Otherness was obfuscated by a stereotype that rendered him at once knowable and dangerous (Dutta, 2004, Bhabha, 1994). Even after refusing to occupy the discursive space created for him by the officers' act of stereotyping Mike remained encircled by the probabilistic truth of the colonial stereotype. By remaining in excess of what could ever be proven the stereotype of the criminal Indian cannot be effectively refuted. This ensures that it remains a real and necessary perceptive structure for police officers looking for signs of crime and danger (Bhabha, 1994). Even though Mike was found to have no criminal record, the predictability rendered by this discursive strategy enables the officers to stand firm in their belief that someone of his "ruffian, criminal type" very well could have (Martinot, 2003b).

Intrigued by the way that Mike so routinely described presenting his Indian status card to the police I asked why he used a status card as his primary form of identification. Letting go a chuckle, Mike explained, "I gave them my status card just to piss them off. 'Cause some of them look at it and are like, 'What kind of identification is this?'[And I'm like] 'It's my status dude,' just to put it in their face." The frequency with which Mike must present his identification to police is not a politically neutral act of law enforcement, but a symptom of the colonial forms of visibility that conflate his aboriginality with a propensity for criminality. By *choosing* to identify himself as a member of an Indian Nation, Mike subverts the act of noticing race that would otherwise ascribe to him the qualities of the criminal Indian.

Upon hearing of these incidents of racism I asked Mike how such colonial encounters with police affected his attitude toward Canadian Authority. Initially saying that, "I shrug it off," Mike went on to explain that,

> you've just got to live with that because you can't fight the cops. There were a couple of times where a couple of my family members were just arguing with the cops 'cause they didn't see that way was right. But the cop was like, "I could put you in and say you're drunk and that's it". And they brought in my cousin and phonebooked him in the back of the car, which is when you use a phonebook like a billyclub so it doesn't cause no bruises. Just knock 'em out and they just said he was drunk

> and put him in the drunk tank…And all you have to do is put someone in a drunk tank 'aww this person is being a threat to the public, she's drunk. And sometime they're not even drunk and put 'em in cells for no reason.

In police officers engaged in their routine activities Mike encounters an authority he knows is beyond impunity, which "you've just got to live with…because you can't fight the cops". To convey the power of police as arbitrary yet consequential Mike (re-)told the story of a scene of police violence of which I had heard previously, yet one for which no Canadian police officers have been proven legally guilty. Through the re-telling of this familiar scene of colonial violence, Mike identifies the police as an authority whose violent, arbitrary power is maintained through exploitation of colonial stereotypes of the drunken Indian.

In inner city spaces aboriginal youth do not encounter police solely engaged in the maintenance of peace and order, a task which would require officers to address each person in the particularity of their actions. Rather, aboriginal youth encounter police that have embodied the priority given to the act of noticing race as they engage in processes of visual generalization that affix aboriginal youth with a stereotyped propensity for crime. This in turn naturalizes the disproportionate surveillance of aboriginal youth who must be controlled and suppressed by (White) agents of Canadian Authority (Martinot, 2003b).

Conclusion

This chapter highlights how aboriginal youth who reside in inner city spaces routinely encounter racist stereotypes meant to naturalize the colonial systems of exclusion, suppression, and confinement to which they are disproportionately subject. Visible as a marker of *natural* inferiority, this stereotyped aboriginal difference is foundational to the White settler mythologies that are propagated to enable the abjuration of colonial violence upon which Canadian Authority is founded (Razack, 2002a, McClintock, 1995). Yet, the ambivalence that inheres in colonial authority ensures aboriginal youth cannot be effectively fixed to the inferiorizing stereotype through which they are made visible in colonial encounters (Bhabha, 1994). In Chapter Four I examine how hip-hop instructors at the Centre exploit this ambivalence to unsettle the imposition of colonial stereotypes. I argue that, through their performance of a post-colonial hybridization, these aboriginal youth retrieve the sign of aboriginality from its relegation to anachronistic space, only to reinscribe it into the landscape of the present in a manner that undermines foundations of colonial authority.

Chapter Three: "Can't Hold Us Back": Hip-Hop and the Performance of (Post) Colonial Possibility

"Not only ought the living present be disturbed by the spirits of the dead, whose suffering justly claims our memory and mourning, but it also ought to be pried upon by the ones still to come, who may also lay claim to justice"

-John D. Caputo, 1997

"I'm just a fool playing with the master's tools,
Learning how to break the rules of this record company coup"

-K-Os "Love Song" from Joyful Rebellion (2004)

One afternoon I found myself standing at the record turntables where I had received daily lessons in hip-hop from one of the instructors charged with teaching inner city youth about the various facets of hip-hop culture. As she played different hip-hop records "from the underground" Julia explained each song's significance in a manner that engaged the concerns of her audience. In the middle of this particular session, one of Julia's hip-hop pupils pulled a record out of her pink army camouflage case and asked pointedly "What is ***this****?" In his hand was a Public Enemy record titled "Can't Hold Me Back!" The record was adorned with the iconography of a police officer in the sites of a rifle for which Public Enemy has become infamous over the last twenty years. "Oh this needs some* ***definite*** *explanation," Julia remarked. She appeared excited by the opportunity to impart the importance of one of the most prolific and influential rap groups on an audience of recently converted hip-hop enthusiasts.*

As she watched the young man cue up the record, Julia pointed to the cover of the record and explained, "[t]his guy here, Chuck D, is a very smart man." Eager to showcase his knowledge of hip-hop, one of the kids asked "like Dr. Dre?" "Well not really like Dr. Dre," she answered, explaining patiently that, "[h]e's smart too but this guy, Chuck D, is one of the original gangsters. But see, for this guy, being a gangster is not about shooting 'em up, it's about breaking the rules that aren't right." As the kids listened intently Julia motioned for me to take note of the chorus, comprised of the *lyrics "can't hold me back, you gonna' have to pop me to stop me."*[10] *"That's like Mike, Jenny and I," she explained, as she gestured having her arms pulled back, "[y]ou know, you can't hold us back!"*

In this Chapter I highlight the performance of post-colonial hybridization that occurred during the instructors' efforts to teach kids about the different elements of hip-hop. By drawing on the political messages of justice and social change articulated by hip-hop artists like Public Enemy, Julia and the other instructors contested colonial processes of racial identification that confine aboriginal youth to peripheral social spaces, providing otherwise marginalized youth the means to declare "you can't hold us back!"

As I explained in Chapter 3, urban aboriginal youth often have little empowering connection to their aboriginality. Instead, they tend to encounter it as a sign of criminality, alcoholism, and anachronism (Razack, 2002b, Ratner, 1996). This Chapter highlights how part of this marginalization is premised on a colonial temporality that casts aboriginality as "out of place" in contemporary social relations (Razack, 2002a, McClintock, 1995). I suggest that, as technologies of the self that allow people to affect transformation of their own ways of being, the different mediums of hip-hop enable urban aboriginal youth to treat the self as a site of cultivation, helping them counter the deleterious, racist systems of meaning that typically comprise their social spaces (Foucault, 1994). This self which is expressed through hip-hop can engage in a performance of post-colonial hybridization by seizing the sign of aboriginality that is cast off as temporally irrelevant and reweaving it into the textuality of the present. I argue that, as acts of intervention, the performance of hip-hop allows the present to be opened up to the past. This allows instructors to refuse the colonial temporality that would otherwise relegate aboriginality to anachronistic spaces, once again reflecting the sentiment articulated by Julia when she declared "can't hold us back!"

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[10] Public Enemy "Can't Hold Me Back" From the Single Can't Hold Me Back (2004).

Refusing that "Fake Thug R & B Scenario"

Hip-hop is a form of artistic expression that developed in New York during the late 1970s following the civically mandated expulsion of Black and Latino communities from Manhattan (Gilroy 1993, Kelley, 1997). This experience, as well as the influential contributions of Afro-Caribbean music, inspired a style of music organized around the layering of beats, heavy bass-lines and ruptures in line, all of which were made possible by technological innovations in music recording (Gilroy, 2000, Rose, 1994). While it is commonly regarded as a musical voice for Black Americans living in urban centres, hip-hop has become increasingly popular amongst urban aboriginal youth across Canada (Lashua, 2005). It holds particular salience for indigenous youth because hip-hop is a space in which status hierarchies are inverted and violent confrontations with unjust authorities acted out. Thus, rap has become a place to challenge and undermine racist Canadian authorities in urban spaces otherwise governed by poverty, racism, and injustice (hooks, 1994, Rose, 1994).

Hip-hop encompasses music of very differing styles and contents (Gilroy, 2000, 1993). Of paramount importance to the hip-hop instructors at the Centre is the distinction often made between mainstream commercialized rap and the more underground hip-hop which they choose to practice. Yet, commercialized gangster rap artists like 50 Cent and Eminem have a visible influence on youth who attend the Centre. This is evident in the youth routinely sporting t-shirts from the "G-Unit" clothing line and reciting lyrics from gangster rap songs like "P*I*M*P" and "In Da Club?". On one summer evening, after I reprimanded a young boy for swearing, he curtly explained that these swear words were part of a 50 Cent song, to which he then recited the lyrics, rapping

> They say I walk around like I got an "S" on my chest,
> Naw, that's a semi-auto, and a vest on my chest,
> I try not to say nothing, the DA might want to play in court,
> But I'll hunt or duck a nigga' down like it's sport,
> Front on me, I'll cut ya, gun butt ya' or bump ya',
> You gettin' money? I can't none ya' then fuck ya',
> I'm not the type to get knocked for D.W.I.,
> I'm the type that'll kill your connect when the coke price rise.[11]

With these rhymes rapper 50 Cent describes his unforgiving use of violence as a means to address conflict. As such he conveys to all those listening that he is not someone to be confronted or opposed. Having grown up in violent and often unforgiving social spaces, many inner city youth come to embody the tough masculine exterior they encounter in gangster rap as a necessary means of self-preservation.

Yet, the hip-hop instructors who grew up in this area routinely conveyed their pronounced disinterest in the consumerist messages of mainstream rap. They often expressed that gangster rap's inattention to issues of self-improvement and justice had little to offer them or the youth at the Centre. At a meeting of the people charged with delivering the hip-hop program Jenny explained her rationale for not playing songs by mainstream gangster rap artists,

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[11] 50 Cent, "What's Up Gangsta?" From the Album Get Rich or Die Tryin' (2002).

> You know, the kids like that gangster stuff, but they don't really know why and they don't really know what it's about. They like it and all the gangbanging, and they'll do it 'cause they see their cousins and brothers do it. It's just what they hear 'cause that's what the corporations play.

According to Jenny, inner city youth encounter gangbanging and the gangster lifestyle as necessary and absolute. It is thrust upon them not only by the lack of more conventional options available in their social space, but also by the corporate channels of music that decide what counts as hip-hop. By dismissing the young people's ability to understand exactly what the gangster lifestyle entails, Jenny disavows the gangster ethic as a viable (emancipatory) solution to the troubles faced by aboriginal youth in inner city spaces.

The less commercialized rap artists played by the instructors routinely articulate a similar dissatisfaction with the rap that occupies mainstream media channels. Canadian hip-hop artist K-Os conveys his disgust with the racist stereotypes that saturate rap when he declares "all these rappers, acting like Man Tan. Can I be candid? I can't stand it."[12] In this rhyme, K-Os compares gangster rappers to an infamous character featured in minstrel shows, a historic form of entertainment in which Black men performed the role of "real negroes" for White audiences (Gilroy, 1993). Here he conveys his objection to rappers' occupation of regressive stereotypes that cast Black men as dangerous, hypersexual, unintelligent, and "out of place" in social spaces of Whiteness (Keith, 2000).

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[12] K-Os "Man I Used to Be" From the Album Joyful Rebellion (2004).

In the song "Hip Hop" notoriously anti-establishment rappers Dead Prez also pit the consumerist message of mainstream rap against the quest to achieve justice for people of colour, rapping

> Emcees get a little bit a lovin' think they hot,
> Talking about *how much money they got*,
> Nigga' all your records sound the same,
> I'm sick of that *fake thug R & B rap* scenario all day on the radio,
> Same scenes in the video,
> Monotonous material, y'all don't here me though
> These record labels *slang our tapes like dope*
> You can be next in line and signed and still be writing rhymes and broke
> Would you rather have a Lexus? Or justice?
> A dream or some substance?
> A Beamer, a necklace, or *freedom*?[13] [italics added]

With these rhymes Dead Prez dismisses material gain as a motive for participation in hip-hop culture[14]. Comparing the corporate propagation of gangster rap to the distribution of crack cocaine, these underground rappers disavow of both of these strategies of "getting paid". This ethic of hip-hop stresses the importance of accumulating capital as a means to exit the poverty and suffering that comprise life in the inner city (Kelley, 1997). Going on to pit indicators of material success against concerns for what could be possible, as signified in the desire for justice, dreams, and freedom, these rhymes suggest that commercialized rap music works to buttress existing inequalities. Primarily concerned with money, sexual prowess, and inner city violence, the mainstream hip-hop that continually re-stages "that fake thug R&B rap scenario" fails to engage listeners beyond the bounds of a consumer capitalist system that turns on the subjugation of Black Americans (Alexander, 2005, Gilroy 2000).

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[13] Dead Prez, "Hip-hop," From the Album Let's Be Free (1996). For similar articulations of this disparity in the concerns for justice and the content of mainstream hip-hop, see Jurassic 5 "…" From the Album Power in Numbers (2002), Perceptionists "Black Dialogue" From the Album Black Dialogue.

[14] (all the while reaping benefits set forth by these that they criticize).

For the practitioners of underground hip-hop constraints that dictate how ideas of self, justice and identity can be expressed in mainstream hip-hop are perceived as impediments to the cause of justice for people affected by systemic racisms. In a meeting about the direction of the Centre's hip-hop program, Julia voiced her frustration with the regressive implications of mainstream rap for people of aboriginal descent when she remarked "[this program] is about showing the kids something else, 'cause all they hear is all that gangster stuff, and it's ruining our people". Mike conveyed a similar distaste for the immobilizing, regressive messages of gangster rap when he suggested "you know, I understand where that gangster rap attitude comes from, you know, being angry about where you're at, but that just doesn't get me anywhere. I'm about positivity". Despite recognizing the utility of gangster rap as a space to perform violence against an unjust social order, Mike conveyed his belief that it will not enable self-improvement nor make possible any meaningful social change. In the place of this gangster ethic, Mike and the other instructors espoused a philosophy of "positivity", which, as I will show in the following section, calls for a heightened attention to and respect for the self.

Cultivating the Self through Positivity

All of the instructors at the Centre spoke of hip-hop as a form of self-expression. In fact, when I asked what attracted Mike to hip-hop, he replied: "It was the way people got to express themselves through music or through words or through dance". Weeks into the start-up of the project I watched as Julia justified the amount of time she spent dancing, spinning records, and writing poetry to a budding hip-hop pupil who felt his time was better spent playing sports. "Well, even though you *learn* things at school and playing hockey or whatever," she explained, being careful not to dismiss any of the young boy's interests, "you need to do other stuff. You need to be able to express yourself, how you feel, you know, your soul". On another occasion, I had arranged to meet up with one of the instructors outside of the Centre to ask some questions about her involvement in hip-hop. When she arrived no more than five minutes late, she proceeded to explain apologetically, "[w]hen I'm writing [poetry] it's like I'm in a zone. I can hear one line of a Dead Prez song and it will tap into something inside, and I will be writing forever." Describing hip-hop as a space for expression of the self, the instructors use the different mediums of break dance, rapping, and spinning records to turn inward and make the self a site of cultivation. This allows them to turn away from the colonial system(s) of meaning that often dictate their lives in Canadian social space(s).

For aboriginal youth who so frequently experience their ability to express and represent themselves constrained by colonial racism(s), hip-hop offers a means to attend to the inner self as a site of cultivation (Ratner, 1996). In creating their selves as edifices capable of withstanding the violent systems of meaning that often comprise inner city spaces, the hip-hop instructors employ the different mediums of hip-hop as technologies of the self. In his later work, social theorist Michel Foucault (1994) concerned himself with the historical development of certain political technologies. Through use of these different technologies people can affect transformation of their own ways of being to attain a particular state of wisdom or happiness (Foucault, 1994). Yet, by using the different mediums of hip-hop to express themselves and **their** refusal to occupy the colonial stereotypes they encounter in Canadian social spaces, the instructors also affect the isolation of a coherent identifiable self (Rose, 1999).

This was made evident when one aboriginal Emcee[15] described how her involvement in hip-hop culture changed her orientation to social space. Having grown up in a family with few financial resources and where responsibilities were downloaded onto her by her mother, Jenny intimated that she was not yet equipped to deal with such pressures. When she entered her early teen years she encountered a social space inundated with drug use and violence. At a meeting of all the people involved in delivering the hip-hop program Jenny explained how the opportunity to create and perform hip-hop helped her contest the corrosive social circumstances that so often comprise life in the inner city, explaining,

> You know I had it really rough. I didn't really get to be a kid, you know, 'cause I was taking care of my brother. And then, I was exposed to a bad lifestyle I didn't really know how to keep up with it all…I didn't know how to stick up for myself. But with [rapping] I've found my voice."

Hip-hop provided Jenny the opportunity to attend to and strengthen her self against the (ruinous) influence of the street, which would otherwise have anchored her to the poverty, sex, and drugs that so often comprise the social space of the inner city. She was forced to turn inward in order to understand and eventually express her self through rap and poetry. This gave Jenny the opportunity to locate "a voice" for her self amidst the colonial systems of meaning that comprise her space. It also allowed her to articulate her *self* against the violence and racisms she encounters in inner city spaces (Foucault, 1994).

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[15] The term Emcee refers to someone who raps and typically precedes an artist's rap name.

Hip-hop producer and MC Kanye West similarly emphasizes the need to strengthen the self against the deleterious circumstances of the inner city, rapping,

> Getting choked by detectives yea yea now check the method
> They be asking us questions, harass and arrest us
> Saying "we eat pieces of shit like you for breakfast"
> Huh? Y'all eat pieces of shit? What's the basis?
> We ain't going nowhere but got suits and cases
> A trunk full of coke, rental car from Avis
> My momma used to say only Jesus can save us
> Well momma I know I act a fool
> But I'll be gone 'til November I got packs to move I hope
>
> [Jesus Walks]
> God show me the way because the Devil's trying to break me down
> [Jesus Walks with me]
> The only thing that I pray is that my feet don't fail me now
> [Jesus Walks]
> And I don't there's nothing I can do now to right my wrongs
> [Jesus Walks with me]
> I want to talk to God but I'm afraid 'cause we ain't spoke in so long[16]

In these rhymes, West raps about the need to acquire spiritual guidance and inner strength as means to withstand life in the inner city, a space he describes as rife with despair, drugs, and gun violence. Yet, for West, spiritual beings are not abstract entities that exist beyond the realm of everyday life. Rather, located within the self, these deities animate his struggles against the deleterious influence of life in the inner city. Without this inner strength the violent dictates of inner city space might otherwise inundate his self with concerns that are contrary to progress and movement out of (criminal) inner city space.

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[16] Kanye West, "Jesus Walks" College Dropout (2004).

The philosophy of positivity that animates the instructors' practice of hip-hop posits this attention to the self as an integral part of emancipatory social change. This is especially evident in the song "5 O'clock", when the Perceptionists rap,

> Now you understand that you your own woman or man,
> Because you broke it down to a simple four step plan,
> Step 1 - Sit and make a plan son,
> Step 2 – Make time for you Boo,
> Step 3 – Turn off your mother fuckin' TV!
> All the sudden there's so much of the world to see,
> And Step 4 is to explore your options and get it poppin',
> To get in the game instead of just watchin',
> Entrepreneurial manoeuvres, self-investment
> That's the shit, I can't contest it.[17]

In these rhymes the Perceptionists espouse the importance of entrepreneurial self-investment. Each step of the plan lauded by these rappers is meant to affect a heightened attention to the self that will make the user of these practices better able to realize a sense of self-fulfillment. As the exterior of the self is turned away from, the inner self is made the site of cultivation that can realize different emancipatory possibilities by refusing the necessity of its existing circumstances. For the aboriginal youth who practice hip-hop, this opportunity to attend to the self

MC Gift of Gab corroborates the need to strengthen the self as a step toward progress and change, rapping

> Do what you gotta' do, *grow* and learn and find your proper calling,
> Stay strong and take in all the knowledge that you can,
> Stay healthy and keep in touch, I'll get them letters flowing fam',
> Say goodbye all it is just a test *to make you stronger*, be a soldier,

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[17] The Perceptionists, "5 O'Clock". From the Album Black Dialogue (2004).

> From here we only *move forward*,
> Upward, onward and over the hump,
> And you know that this a lot of years,
> But it's a lot of precious life to live,
> God dwells within, find him inside, free your soul.[18]

The line that "god lies within" makes evident this rapper's belief that strength comes from inside. This better buttresses the users of these technologies against the flow of colonial systems of meaning that seek to topple and subject them to certain identities. Once the self is made a source of strength people of colour are thought to possess the ability to more effectively unsettle the divisive, racist systems of meaning that comprise Canadian social spaces.

Breakdance and the Performance of Hybridity

Most aboriginal youth living in urban centres have been estranged from indigenous cultures by centuries of colonization that render different cultural practices "out of place" or illegal in (White) Canadian social spaces (Alfred, 2005, Ratner, 1996). Encounters with colonial stereotypes that confine aboriginality to peripheral spaces and stigmatized identities often make the White settlement of Canada appear predestined and inevitable (McClintock, 1995, Bhabha, 1994). Aboriginal difference is understood in relation to a self-aggrandizing Whiteness, which acts as "the absent centre against which everything is silently compared" (Lee and Lutz, 2005: 18). Forced to occupy the past of which White Canadians and their attendant consumer practices are the present and future, aboriginal youth often come to believe their occupation of stigmatized marginal social stratum is inevitable.

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[18] Gift of Gab "In a Minute Doe," From the Album 4th Dimensional Rocketships Going Up[italics added]. (2004).

Indigenous youth most often experience aboriginality as a sign of the past which is of little consequence to their present and future. While he took part in pow-wows at a very young age, Mike was extricated from aboriginal cultural practices when he was placed in a White foster home. Upon expressing interest in learning more about his Cree heritage to his White foster "mother", Mike was told that aboriginal culture and any belief in the Creator were wrong. In this foster home he was forced to attend church with the rest of the "family". Julia, who is of Indian and aboriginal descent, also knew little of her aboriginal heritage when she was younger. She only gained exposure to it in her twenties after her father committed suicide. According to Julia, it was the trauma of this event that prompted an exploration of her self that eventually sparked an interest in learning about her aboriginality. All of the hip-hop instructors experienced their aboriginality as irrelevant when compared to (White) Canadian ways of being.

Casting aside this colonial temporality, many of the hip-hop instructors now use hip-hop as a medium to (re-)claim and explore their aboriginal heritage. An avid and talented break dancer who performs at venues all across North America, Mike incorporates traditional indigenous dance steps into his break dancing. He learned this practice of hybridization from a Haitian b-boy who imports elements of Voodoo tribal ceremonies into his break dance battles. In addition to adding pow-wow dance-steps to his extensive repertoire of power-moves, pops and breaks, Mike also integrates a smudging into many of his top-rocks- a term that refers to the steps a break dancer performs before she/he begins doing breaks and power-moves on the ground. Mike illustrated the role that a smudging plays in his breakdancing when he explained,

> [w]ith the smudging, you cleanse your mind, body, and soul. You put the smoke toward your eyes for better seeing, your mouth for better speaking, over your head for your mind, and bring it to your heart with the smoke. So, what I do with my dance is that at the same time that I do my thing, I pretend I am smudging at the same time [which he explains as he intimates putting his open hands over his ears, eyes, mouth, heart and head].

In an effort to keep his break dancing innovative Mike attends traditional Cree ceremonies at which he learns different indigenous dance moves. As Mike explained, "I try to mimic what I see when I go to pow-wow, and then go home to my dance floor and try to mimic it at the same time as I break [dance]". By attending pow-wows Mike can affect his own knowledge and experience of the sign of aboriginality. He then employs the politicized systems of meaning that comprise hip-hop to retrieve this sign from its relegation to anachronistic space by making it relevant to his cultural present in (inner) urban space. I bore witness to this during a break dance performance staged by the instructors at the Centre.

> (September 16/2005)
>
> *One Friday afternoon after I had finished the bulk of my fieldwork at the Centre, I decided to attend a hip-hop performance the instructors were staging for the kids. Once the breakdancers arrived I took on the unenviable task of herding more than thirty kids into the gymnasium to watch the performance, a task that was made difficult by the attachments they all have to their daily routines of video games, billiards, and basketball. One of the hip-hop instructors who knew me as the liaison between the hip-hop project and the staff at the Centre asked me to assemble everyone into a half-circle,*

a task that was made ***especially*** *difficult by the teenagers who felt they were too tough to sit in a circle. After negotiating all I could with the kids, many of whom chose to feign disinterest at the back of the gymnasium, Mike called for everyone's attention over the microphone that hooks into the gymnasium's sound system.*

"Hey everyone," he said to a chorus of half-enthusiastic youth, "You know me, I'm Mike, and me and my crew are going to perform for you today. Is that cool with you guys?" He received a more enthusiastic, yet still muted response, to which he replied, "Cool, well I just want to tell you a little about what we do. We're here to expose some misconceptions about aboriginal culture, and show you that aboriginal culture is here and beautiful. I am aboriginal and I grew up in this neighbourhood, and you know we're not here to talk about being a gangster or being a thug, we're here to talk about positivity cause that's what we're about. So, before we do some break dancing, my friend here is going to do some traditional hoop dancing. Is that cool?"

Upon receiving endorsement from the crowd of young people Mike passed the microphone to a man wearing a black and white leather outfit that was intricately adorned with colourful beads and feathers. At this point I became worried that Mike had lost the crowd of young people who would not be interested in watching a cultural practice that has little relevance to their lives in urban space. Once the music started to play, the hoop dancer began his performance. As the music reached different crescendos, the *dancer used large hoops to intimate different animals while performing dance steps of increasing intricacy, all the while keeping the audience of urban aboriginal youth fully engaged in his performance. After the performance, Mike explained to me that hoop dancing is an indigenous cultural practice that stages the interconnectedness of all living things. It is meant to signify the manner in which life unfolds through growth and change.*

"Always the researcher", as one of the instructors remarked about my penchant for scrutinizing album covers, I had brought along a digital camera to take pictures of the break dancing. As the feats of artistry increased with difficulty some of the kids instructed me about when to take photos, even chiding me when I did not capture "his wickedest move". Growing tired of their derision I turned the camera over to one of the boys sitting nearby. He proceeded to take five pictures, all of which were better than my failed attempts at photography. Upon finishing his performance the hoop dancer received a thunderous applause from the crowd.

At this point, Mike and his break dance crew took to the stage and performed a very impressive break-battle. It was during this performance that I first noticed the more traditional indigenous dance steps that Mike talked about integrating into his break dancing. The break battle continued for another five minutes, during which the audience of on-looking kids applauded and whistled at the power moves and breaks they felt were especially remarkable. When the music cut out and the kids let out a sigh of *disappointment, Mike asked if everyone would like to see more break dancing, a question that received a loud applause of approval.*

For this encore performance, the break dancers singled out certain kids from the audience who would take part in the break battle. After a number of b-boys[19] *showed their break skills, each of the kids performed the different moves they had picked up over the last few months. Upon hearing the supportive applause the kids received from the audience of their peers I remarked to one of the staff sitting nearby, "it sucks that Brodie couldn't be here, he'd love to blow everyone away." Brodie was one of the Centre youth who had become the most avid and skilled break dancer at the Centre but was not there that day because he had to take care of his younger cousin.*

When the music for the break battle came to an end, one of the girls in the audience put up her hand and asked if we could see more hoop dancing, a request which the performer gladly obliged. Once the dancer's performance came to a conclusion the audience dispersed. While many of the older teens returned to the foyer to resume playing their videogames and billiards, a pack of more than fifteen kids between the ages of seven and twelve swarmed the performers to learn some of the dance steps they had just seen. I noticed with special interest the crowd of eight kids who had swiped hula-hoops from the equipment room and gathered around the hoop dancer to learn how to perform this traditional indigenous cultural practice.

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[19] A term that refers to men breakdancers.

On this afternoon, we bore witness to a performance of (post-) colonial hybridization. By juxtaposing traditional hoop dancing with break-dancing Mike and his crew made indigenous cultural practices relevant to urban aboriginal youth. They showed that, as Mike articulated before their performance, "aboriginal culture is here and it is beautiful". When I later asked what he meant by this statement Mike explained that,

> [a] lot of people try to label and look at aboriginal people as failures, [saying] they're just a bunch of drunks, alcoholics, a bunch of bums, you know, what they see on the street...But there is aboriginal people who are doing well for themselves, as opposed to living the stereotypical life...That's why we try to promote in our message is to break down that misconception, to show that aboriginal people have a beautiful culture, as opposed to what they see on the street.

In this explanation Mike conveys how his breakdancing unsettles the operation of racist stereotypes that make his racial difference visible as a marker of anachronism in Canadian social space. As I explained in Chapter 3, colonial racisms work by making visible certain markers of difference that enable the relegation of subject peoples to certain inert racial categories (Dutta, 2004, Mohanram, 1999). By proving that aboriginal cultural practices can be relevant to the lives of inner city youth this performance of hybridization disrupts ideological representations of temporality that relegate aboriginality to a time long since passed. Mike and his crew wrestle the sign of aboriginality from its imposed irrelevance to (re-)inscribe it into the textuality of the present, redeeming its relevance to the performance of everyday life in inner city spaces (Bhabha, 1994).

Mike made this especially evident when he described the feeling of satisfaction he gets from the positive reaction many aboriginal youth have to this incorporation of aboriginality into break dancing. He explaining that,

> [i]t's always good when we do shows and people see that we're doing our culture, and people are like, "yeah it's cool, it's cool to do your culture," a lot of kids don't even know about their culture and they're away from the reserve and they're in the city, so they don't even know how to speak their language, and they know nothing about their ceremonies. So when we do shows, people are like "it's cool to practice this, and it's cool to smudge". And some of the kids before would be like [intimating a young person's voice] "nah I don't want to do that, that's too Indian. When we expose that, kids are like, oh cool man!"

By seizing the sign of aboriginality and (re-)staging it in the present using a *relevant* cultural practice, aboriginal youth can experience the sign of aboriginality *as relevant*. Through their encounter with these different possible representations of aboriginality inner city youth come to regard cultural practices once considered "too Indian" as "cool".

In so seizing the sign of aboriginality Mike and his crew engage in a form of hybridization that was common amongst the hip-hop instructors who often drew on indigenous symbols while rapping, break dancing and tagging. Not a simple mixing together of different cultural elements, the instructors' incorporation of indigenous cultural practices into the different mediums of hip-hop is an act of insurgent appropriation in which calcified signs of aboriginality -once experienced as immutable markers of inferiority- are rearticulated in subversive ways (Jacobs, 1996). In making the sign of aboriginality effectual and relevant to the lives of inner city youth, these acts of hybridization contest given symbols of authority that premise (White) Canadian entitlement on the relegation of aboriginality to anachronistic spaces (McClintock, 1995). As a performance of hybridization, hip-hop allows aboriginal youth to engage in a "creative remaking of the colonial past by the colonized in the service of a post-colonial present/future, which through hybridity, a postcolonial effectiveness is returned to the colonized, who steer a subversive return to the colonial heart" (Bhabha, 1994: 28).

When retrieving suppressed cultural practices from a time long since passed, indigenous peoples often risk being re-cast as anachronistic once they try to strike up roots in cultural tradition (Gilroy, 2000, Bhabha, 1994, Bhabha, 1992). These acts of hybridization inflect signs of aboriginality in cultural practices that are already popular amongst urban youth. Its practitioners avoid the recalcification of aboriginality because they are not forced to genuflect before the essentialized tablet of aboriginal tradition (Bhabha, 1994). During their innovative and politically crucial articulations of cultural difference the hip-hop instructors open up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without the assumed hierarchy that would otherwise subject aboriginality to Canadian Whiteness (Bhabha, 1994). Hip-hop provides youth of aboriginal descent a space to articulate identity in a manner that subverts and undermines the constraints that often structure articulations of cultural difference in Canadian social space.

By (re-)staging indigenous cultural practices as effectual elements of the present, the instructors use hip-hop to disrupt the necessity of their colonial present. This parallels a wider trend in hip-hop in which symbols of the past are re-inscribed into the textuality of the present. Amidst rhymes about the racisms propagated by Black entertainers who sell themselves to a racist consumerist culture, the

Perceptionists declare, "Oh shit, got a call from Brother Malcolm, awaking from the grave he's asking 'what the fuck happened?'"[20] Staging the re-birth of one of the most defiant and visionary Black leaders in American history, these rappers open the present to a spectre of the past who signifies refusal of a racist order once thought to be absolute. Brooklyn MC Jean Grae employs similar civil rights imagery in her rhymes about the struggles faced by young Black women, rapping: "for rubber pellet scars on Auntie Elna's back I march."[21]

Historical figures who symbolize past struggles endured to challenge the necessity of racisms once presented as absolute are re-inscribed into the textuality of the present. Like the break dancers performing hybridization, these rappers engage in a form of insurgent art that,

> does not merely recall the past as a social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent in-between space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of the necessity, not the nostalgia, of living (Bhabha, 1994: 234).

As an insurgent art form hip-hop allows aboriginal youth to disrupt the necessity of their present subjugation. It opens up their present to cultural practices long suppressed and calcified by White ways of being (Alfred, 2005, Razack, 2002a). The decision to make relevant indigenous dances otherwise thought to be ineffectual in Canadian social space challenges colonial constructions of temporality that relegate aboriginality to anachronistic spaces. A form of dis-juncture or disadjustment is performed that opens the present up to a past thought to be no longer relevant or effectual (Bhabha, 1994).

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[20] The Perceptionists, "Black Dialogue" From the Album Black Dialogue (2004).
[21] Talib Kweli, "Black Girl Pain" From the Album Beautiful Struggle (2004).

By reinscribing these symbols of past struggles into the present, practitioners of hip-hop draw attention to the effort that has gone into the suppression of aboriginality. While standing around the turntables at the Centre I bore witness to a freestyle battle[22] between Jenny and a young man who also knew how to rap. Amidst her rhymes about growing up in the hood and the obstacles she has endured, Jenny also rapped about the violence experienced by aboriginal peoples rapping "our race was almost extinguished". Julia often drew on the connections between colonization and the racisms experienced by aboriginal youth to elucidate ideas about prejudice and inequality that were articulated in more political hip-hop. While playing the song "Wonder Years", Julia stopped the record when MC Wildchild rapped, "[I just wish I knew] the key to success so all my people could get paid".[23] After letting me hear these rhymes a second time, Julia turned to me and explained,

> Now this isn't about getting paid, like "paid" [points to ring]. He's not talking about bling here. He wants his people to get paid [points to her open hand] for their land and for what they've had to endure. It's like us, we want to get paid for our land getting taken, cause it's affecting us everyday.

By drawing attention to the social inheritance of colonialism that still structures Canadian social space, the instructors do **not** use hip-hop to resolve historic differences into a new totality. This would simply help realize colonization through their assimilation into its eventual goal. Julia made this evident when she spoke of the struggles she went through while trying to learn about her aboriginality immersed in the colonial structure of the University. She explained that,

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[22] The term freestyle battle refers to an impromptu performance that typically takes place between two or more rappers who try to outdo the other Emcees with impressive rhymes, rhythm and wit.
[23] Wildchild "Wonder Years" Secondary Protocol. (1997).

> It was really tough to be at school while I was getting in touch with my culture. To sit in class and hear about how my spirituality is only a theory, that our belief that a rock has a spirit is only a theory was infuriating. That rock has a spirit. That's what they've almost missed. You know, the earth has a living rhythm, the rhythm of the drum. To hear them say that we were backwards, that our spirituality is a theory, it's like being raped. You know, it is being raped, of what you value.

By describing the violence she experienced upon having her aboriginal difference sublated into a White colonial ontology, Julia conveys how hip-hop is not employed to resolve the difference into a new totality, but rather to create a hybrid, "inappropriate" site for them to *be*. Here her aboriginality is neither sublated nor calcified (Bhabha, 1994).

Hip-hop offers aboriginal youth a place in which the logics of colonial temporality can be contested and subverted. In the song "Guns are Drawn", which the instructors played at the Centre on a number of occasions, Philadelphia hip-hop group The Roots describe hip-hop as a space to suspend the necessity of naturalized White ways of being when they rap,

> The middle of the night
> We fight like barbarians
> In sight of the former might
> You might think that it's a waste
> Of our time
> And I think you would be right
> Till he drop that rhyme[24]

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[24] The Roots, "Guns Are Drawn" The Tipping Point (2004).

For the Roots, the space in which they perform their music is where they can disrupt the absolute dictates of White capitalist ways of being and open up the realities of American inner city space to the power of the past.

Able to challenge the colonial systems of meanings that cast them as inferior and out of place, aboriginal youth convey their experience of hip-hop as a place in which they can disrupt and undermine the racisms that often dictate life in Canadian social space. Approaching Canadian social space as a site of subjugation, especially for people of aboriginal descent, Julia explained that "[hip-hop] is everything to us. Our music is the only place within all the system that's real, where we're free". The instructors approach hip-hop as a space in which they can experience and represent themselves free of the dictates of colonial racisms that subject aboriginality to Canadian Whiteness. Yet, for the instructors, hip-hop and music are not approached as something that can be quarantined from the rest of their daily lives. As Julia explained to me one afternoon,

> you know, music was a part of everything. It was never separated into little spaces where you could only listen to music. Like now, you know, I'm not allowed to sing and dance at work [in the hospital cafeteria], 'cause I'll be fired. But it used to be everywhere, all the time part of everything.

In many indigenous cultures, art referred to the way people lived, and was not separable from everyday life (Lashua, 2005). Renewing this indigenous ethic of art in the present, the instructors approach hip-hop as something that animates their daily activities, reflecting Julia's declaration that, "[hip-hop] is everything to us".

Conclusion

Comprised of political systems of meaning, hip-hop has long been used to critique and challenge repressive social structures (Lashua, 2005, Kelley, 1997, Gilroy, 1993). While hip-hop is most often approached as a medium of resistance for urban Black Americans, I have evidenced how urban aboriginal youth employ these systems of meaning to subvert colonial stereotypes that naturalize the subjection of aboriginality to Canadian Whiteness (Kelley, 1997). Hip-hop enables the location of a strengthened, coherent self that can be pitted against colonial racisms. This makes possible the retrieval of aboriginality from its relegation to anachronistic space. I have shown that, through their performance of a post-colonial hybridization, the hip-hop instructors render the sign of aboriginality effectual and relevant to life in urban space, undermining the authority of Canadian Whiteness that is premised on its confinement to a time long since passed (Razack, 2002a, McClintock, 1995).

Chapter Four: Conclusion

Inner city youth have typically been re-presented through colonial modes of identification that obfuscate their subjection to criminalized, impoverished spaces. This thesis has drawn on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at a drop-in recreational centre in the inner city of Edmonton to elucidate the ambivalent ways that exclusionary conceptions of race, space, and age circumscribe how youth navigate Canadian social spaces. While at the centre I was witness to these fixing forms of colonial identification as they worked to encircle inner city youth in a stereotyped difference that rendered them knowable through inferiorizing re-representations. My reflexive participation in this impoverished space has made it possible to delineate the manifold ways in which these colonial conceptions of identity are enacted.

Through my attention to how indigenous youth encounter stereotyped conceptions of Aboriginality I have evinced how colonial racisms permeate inner city spaces. Post-colonial theorizations of fixity have helped me illustrate how colonial racisms enclose indigenous youth within stereotypes of the criminal, alcoholic, and ultimately anachronistic Indian. Attending to the lack of research that examines how these racisms are experienced, this thesis has provided unique ethnographic insight into how these fixing modes of representation render aboriginal youth naturally subject to the colonial violence upon which claims to Canadian Authority are founded and maintained.

This facet of my thesis has evinced how the mass-mediated aggrandizement of Whiteness affects the different ways that indigenous youth experience their aboriginality. My reflexive participation in the social space of the Centre has allowed me to elucidate how youth regularly consume, discuss and re-stage different mediums of popular culture that abrogate Whiteness to the norm for judgements about intelligence, sexuality and order. It is against this backdrop of celebrated Whiteness that aboriginality is made visible to indigenous youth residing in inner city spaces. For most of the youth who attend the Centre, the ubiquitous figure of the frontier Indian in mass-mediated depictions of indigenous peoples renders aboriginality a sign of anachronism. When subject to these colonial representations, indigenous youth often encounter their aboriginality as a quality that is of little beneficial consequence to their everyday lives in Canadian urban spaces.

In my illustration of how colonial racisms constitute inner city spaces I have also highlighted how different processes of social and spatial immobilization anchor indigenous youth to impoverished, criminalized urban areas. When travelling through Canadian social spaces, indigenous youth regularly encounter a racist gaze that marks their bodies with a stereotyped racial difference that is conflated with a propensity for violence and criminal behaviour. My research demonstrates how police officers who rely on aboriginality as an inert signifier of danger and criminality play a central role in the immobilization of indigenous youth. These processes of racialization lead many indigenous youth to feel "out of place" in settler spaces of Whiteness. It is these everyday encounters with stereotypes of the derelict Indian that affect an internalization of colonial geographies that map aboriginality onto impoverished, criminalized spaces. Here youth typically experience a violent hyper-masculine space where there are few opportunities to acquire personal and economic security independent of the economies of crime and desperation that permeate inner city spaces.

Crystal Kids Youth Centre was established to provide neighbourhood youth a place where they can be unaffected by these unforgiving realities of inner city space. Yet, the classed conceptions of danger and disorder that fuel the production of this space magnify the feelings of exclusion experienced by inner city youth. In fact, Centre organizers' attempts to spatially extricate the potential that youth embody from the dangers of inner city space actually work to protect a middle-class conception of youth that bears little resemblance to young people's lived experiences in inner city spaces. This quest to protect youth from the dangerous influence of the streets ultimately disavows the different social capacities they develop in their everyday routines in inner city spaces. Through my examination of the supervision practices used by Centre staff I have evinced how neighbourhood youth are ultimately rendered *excludable* from a space that should be fashioned to include and value their different and often remarkable experiences.

My account of how different social actors use space at the Centre also delineates the different ways that youth perturb the production of "safe space" through exhibition of their potential for violence at the Centre. These narratives reveal how many neighbourhood youth negotiate the perceived dangers of inner city space by communicating their toughness and independence from (adult) others- qualities that are at odds with the middle-class conceptions of childhood that Centre staff have set out to protect. This explication of how youth contest exclusionary conceptions of childhood highlights the problems inherent in formulations of safety for children that are premised on the possibility that inner city youth can be returned to a state of innocence and emotional immaturity.

My participation in a hip-hop program at the Centre has also allowed me to evidence how indigenous youth use this artistic form of expression to unsettle their subjection to colonial processes of subjectification. Hip-hop has long been used to articulate opposition to racist social orders that consign people of colour to impoverished urban spaces. This thesis has shown how indigenous youth approach hip-hop as a space to contest the racisms and violence they experience in Canadian social spaces. Through my explication of how the instructors disavow the stereotypes and hyper-masculine violence that comprise mainstream hip-hop, I have highlighted the oft-overlooked messages of social justice and self-improvement that animate underground hip-hop. It is through their practice of a style of hip-hop that affirms the importance of self-fulfillment that many indigenous youth identify and locate a sense of self through and against the colonial racisms that would otherwise fix them to criminalized identities.

To illustrate the subversive ways that indigenous youth use hip-hop as a space to contest colonial racisms I have also drawn on post-colonial theorizations of hybridity. An amalgam of different Black American, Afro-Caribbean and Latino musical traditions, hip-hop has always been regarded as a hybridized form of musical expression (Kelley, 1997, Gilroy, 1993). My research has shown how the aboriginal youth who taught hip-hop at the Centre have used the hybridity of this medium of self-expression to contest their subjection to colonial processes of identification. Through their incorporation of indigenous cultural practices into the performance of hip-hop, indigenous youth are able to wrestle the sign of aboriginality from its forced relegation to anachronistic space. These acts of hybridization make this once criminalized sign of aboriginality relevant to life in Canadian social spaces. I have shown that these acts of resistance problematize Canadian symbols of authority that cast aboriginality as an inert signifier of anachronistic peoples (Razack, 2002a).

This thesis provides one of the only ethnographic explications of how youth experience inner city spaces. I have shown how this population of youth is in dire need of spaces where their differences will not be excluded or sublated into social orders to secure the hegemony of White Canadian adults. While many indigenous youth experience hip-hop as one such place, it remains unclear exactly how this form of self- expression perpetuates inequalities through arbitrary gender, class, and race distinctions. Until concerted efforts are made to open up more spaces where this marginalized population of youth can exist without fear of exclusion, inner city youth will remain excludable from social spaces that are fashioned for White Canadian middle-class subjects.

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Appendix A - List of Songs Cited

K-Os, "Love Song," From the Album: Joyful Rebellion (2004).

Public Enemy, "Can't Hold Me Back," From the Single: Can't Hold Me Back (2005).

50 Cent, "What Up Gangsta?" From the Album: Get Rich or Die Tryin (2003).

K-Os, "Man I Used to Be," From the Album: Joyful Rebellion (2004).

Dead Prez, "Hip-Hop," From the Album: Let's Be Free (2000).

Kanye West, "Jesus Walks," From the Album: College Dropout (2004).

The Perceptionists, "5 O'Clock," From the Album: Black Dialogue (2005).

Gift of Gab, "In a Minute Doe," From the Album: 4th Dimensional Rocketships Going Up. (2004).

The Perceptionists, "Black Dialogue," From the Album: Black Dialogue (2005).

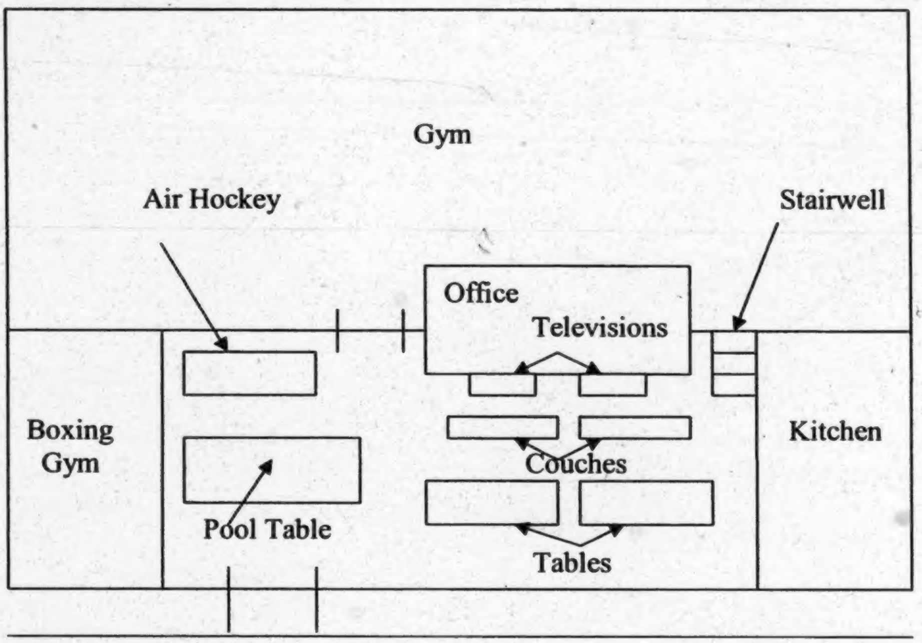
Talib Kweli, "Black Girl Pain," From the Album: Beautiful Struggle (2004).

Wildchild, "Wonder Years," From the Album: Secondary Protocol (2003).

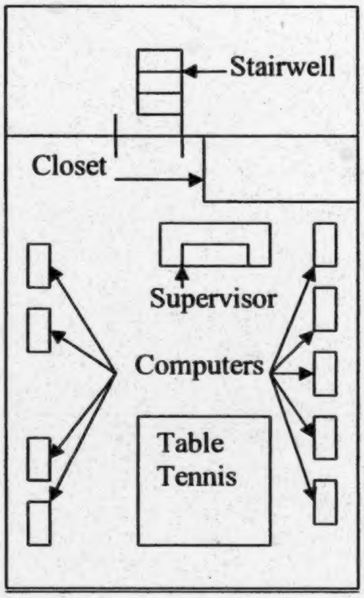
The Roots, "Guns Are Drawn," From the Album: The Tipping Point (2004).

Appendix B – Diagrams of Crystal Kids Building

Ground Level


Gym
Air Hockey
Stairwell
Office
Televisions
Boxing Gym
Couches
Kitchen
Pool Table
Tables

Upper Level


Stairwell
Closet
Supervisor
Computers
Table Tennis

Appendix C - Ethics Application

Brief Summary of Research

How do Youth experience the simultaneous cultivation and repression of their Identities? I will explore this question in my thesis research by drawing on my participation in the exportation of a music education program from one school to a drop-in centre for youth living in Edmonton's inner city. Started at the Boyle Street Secondary School -an alternative charter school that caters to "at risk" youth-, the program provides students with the space and technology to write and perform rap music, a form of expression that allows Youth to reflect on and negotiate their experiences of repression. A number of the students and alumni from Boyle Street School are now involved in starting this program at Crystal Kids, a not-for-profit, drop in centre for youth between the ages of 6-17 located in Downtown Edmonton. Granted access to the Youth participating in the start-up of this program, I will be acting as a resource for the students, helping them address any problems that might emerge in the set-up of the program. Situated amongst the Youth in their daily interactions, I will gather the data for my research through ethnographic, naturalistic observation, complimented by unstructured interviews with the mentors and textual analyses of the students' lyrics. Key research questions include: How do the Youth experience their exclusion from public space? How do propagated notions of multiculturalism, which cultivate Racialized Identities, affect the lives of marginalized youth? How does acceptance of imposed Racialized identities affect the opportunities available to youth? To date, there is a noticeable absence of empirical work examining how Racialized Youth experience imposed systems of meaning, especially in Canadian urban centres. This study is important for the contribution it will make to theoretical and empirical knowledge about power, racialization, aboriginality and exclusion from public space.

1. Assessment of Harm

In conducting my research, I will ensure that participants will not be subjected to unnecessary risks of immediate, lasting or serious harm. To gather valid data through ethnographic observation, I must affect the environment of the youth as little as possible, As I plan to make great effort to reduce any alteration to their daily experiences, my research has been designed to ensure the youth will not be exposed to potential harms that are greater than those they experience in the aspects of everyday life related to my research. As I do not foresee any adverse effects resulting from my research procedures, my research is of minimal risk to my research participants.

2. Informed and Voluntary Consent

This study has been designed in such a way as to ensure informed consent, participant anonymity and confidentiality. Most of my data will be gathered from my interactions with a select number of mentors from the Boyle Street Secondary School. Prior to undertaking my research, I will explain the purpose of my research to these participants in jargon-free terms, ensuring they understand that what I observe during my participation may become part of my research findings. I will ensure they understand their participation in my research is absolutely voluntary, making them aware they can ask me to leave a setting at any point. For those mentors who are under the age of 18, written consent from parents will be obtained wherever possible. As data will be gathered from the interactions involving the staff at the centre, written informed consent will also be obtained from the staff as well. If a staff member objects to my presence in any activity, I will leave immediately.

Much of my data will also be gathered while observing interactions involving the youth who frequent the drop-in centre. Crystal Kids services more than 50 Youth every day. While there is a stable core of about 30 youth who attend the centre on a daily basis, membership to my study's population of interest is constantly changing, making it virtually impossible to obtain informed, voluntary consent from all the youth at the drop-in centre. This inability to obtain voluntary informed consent from all the participants is mitigated by the fact that my research is of minimal risk to the participants; is unlikely to affect the rights and welfare of the participants; and involves no therapeutic intervention in the lives of the participants. For those participants from who I have not obtained voluntary, informed consent, I will ensure they are aware of my role as a researcher from the University of Alberta when given the appropriate opportunity. As most of data will be gathered from interactions with the mentors and small groups of students, I will most often be able to explain my role as a researcher to the youth, and the nature of my research. If any of the youth object to my presence, I will leave immediately.

Because of the participants' age and level of maturity, conducting this ethnography requires sensitivity to the needs of the participants. For the youth who frequent the drop-in centre, I will ensure they are aware of my role as a researcher, and make every effort to make certain a capable third party has provided consent that is in the best interests of the youth. As my research involves naturalistic observation and will not allow for identification of the research subjects, the site supervisor for the drop-in centre –already charged with looking out for the best interests of the youth- will provide consent for the youth, whose parents are in absentia.

3. Anonymity and Confidentiality

Following each foray into the field, I will take written notes on my experiences while at the drop-in centre. As use of a tape-recorder during my time at the drop-in centre could unduly alienate many of the youth, I will rely on accurate note-taking to capture what I observed in the field. To ensure minimal risks to confidentiality, no one will have access to my field notes, and all coding will be done solely by the researcher. In guaranteeing the participants anonymity, the names of interview participants will be replaced by pseudonyms in the final report. When I am writing up the study I will remove any information that may reveal the identity of the youth or those who are working at the drop-in centre. Should participants have any questions or complaints regarding the nature of this study or its research procedures, they will be directed to contact my primary supervisor, Dr. Bryan Hogeveen. All participants will be provided with a hard-copy of Dr. Hogeveen's contact information.

4. Researchers Must be Knowledgeable, Trained and Competent

This research project has been preceded by a year of coursework that allowed me to gain a comprehensive understanding of youth justice, the subjugation of aboriginal peoples, urban systems of exclusion, and the practical execution of ethnographies. In addition to a comprehensive literature review for the purpose of this project, I am also well versed in the ethical guidelines established by the University of Alberta. Also, my research is being supervised by Professor Bryan Hogeveen who has extensive experience in conducting research in the areas of youth justice and racialization, providing me with access to a wealth of knowledge regarding the issues I will encounter while in the field.